THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

A VIRGINIA SCOUT

"You were never meant for the frontier."

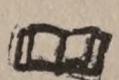
A VIRGINIA SCOUT

By

HUGH PENDEXTER

Author of
KINGS OF THE MISSOURI, ETC.

Frontispiece by
D. C. HUTCHISON



INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

Copy 2

COPYRIGHT 1920
THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

COPYRIGHT 1922
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

PZ7
.P375
V.2
Copy 2

Printed in the United States of America

PRESS OF
BRAUNWORTH & CO.
BOOK MANUFACTURERS
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

APR 14 1922
©CL A659589

To

Faunce Pendexter

My Son and Best of Seven-Year-Old Scouts
This Story Is Lovingly Dedicated

m.v.g. my. 2-22.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Three Travelers	1
II	Indian-Haters	23
III	Over the Mountains	55
IV	I Report to My Superiors	81
V	Love Comes a Cropper	106
VI	The Pack-Horse-Man's Medicine	133
VII	Lost Sister	167
VIII	In Abb's Valley	193
IX	Dale Escapes	229
X	Our Medicine Grows Stronger	265
XI	Back to the Blue Wall	289
XII	The Shadows Vanish	311
XIII	Peace Comes to the Clearing	352

A VIRGINIA SCOUT

A Virginia Scout

CHAPTER I

THREE TRAVELERS

IT WAS good to rest in the seclusion of my hollow sycamore. It was pleasant to know that in the early morning my horse would soon cover the four miles separating me from the soil of Virginia. As a surveyor, and now as a messenger between Fort Pitt and His Lordship, the Earl of Dunmore, our royal governor, I had utilized this unique shelter more than once when breaking my journey at the junction of the Monongahela and the Cheat.

I had come to look upon it with something of affection. It was one of my wilderness homes. It was roughly circular and a good eight feet in diameter, and never yet had I been disturbed while occupying it.

During the night I heard the diabolic screech of a loon somewhere down the river, while closer by rose the pathetic song of the whippoorwill. Strange

contrasts and each very welcome in my ears. I was awake with the first rays of the sun mottling the bark and mold before the low entrance to my retreat. The rippling melody of a mocking-bird deluged the thicket. Honey-bees hovered and buzzed about my tree, perhaps investigating it with the idea of moving in and using it for a storehouse. The Indians called them the "white man's flies," and believed they heralded the coming of permanent settlements. I hoped the augury was a true one, but there were times when I doubted.

Making sure that the priming of my long Deckhard rifle was dry, I crawled out into the thicket and stood erect. As far as the eye could roam stretched the rich bottom-lands and the low ridges, covered with the primeval growths of giant walnuts, maples, oaks and hickory. Small wonder that the heart of the homeseeker should covet such a country.

Groves of beeches, less desired by settlers, were noisy with satisfied squirrels. From river to ridge the air was alive with orioles and cardinals and redstarts. And could I have stood at the western rim of my vision I would have beheld the panorama repeated, only even richer and more delectable; for there was nothing but the ancient forest between me and the lonely Mississippi.

Birds and song and the soft June air and the mystery of the Kentucky country tugging at my heartstrings. I felt the call very strong as I stood there

in the thicket, and gladly would I have traveled West to the richest game-region ever visited by white men. From some who had made the trip I had heard wonderful stories of Nature's prodigality. There were roads made through tangled thickets by immense herds of buffaloes smashing their way five abreast. Deer were too innumerable to estimate. To perch a turkey merely required that one step a rod or two from the cabin door. Only the serious nature of my business, resulting from the very serious nature of the times, held me back.

On this particular morning when the summer was in full tide of song and scents and pleasing vistas, I was bringing important despatches to Governor Dunmore. The long-looked-for Indian war was upon us. From the back-country to the seaboard Virginians knew this year of 1774 was to figure prominently in our destiny.

In the preceding spring we realized it was only a question of time when we must "fort" ourselves, or abandon the back-country, thereby losing crops and cabins. When young James Boone and Henry Russell were killed by Indians in Powell's Valley in the fall of 1773, all hope of a friendly penetration of the western country died. Ever since Colonel Bouquet's treaty with the Ohio tribes on the collapse of Pontiac's War the frontier had suffered from many small raids, but there had been no organized warfare.

During those ten years much blood had been spilled and many cabins burned, but the red opposition had not been sufficient to stop the backwoodsmen from crowding into the Alleghanies. And only a general war could prevent them from overflowing down into the bottoms of the Ohio. The killing of friendly Shawnees at Pipe Creek below the mouth of the Little Kanawha in April, followed three days later by the cruel slaughter of John Logan's relatives and friends at Baker's groggery opposite Yellow Creek, had touched off the powder.

But the notion that the massacre of Logan's people at Joshua Baker's house was the cause of the war is erroneous. For any one living in the country at the time to have believed it would be too ridiculous. That brutal affair was only one more brand added to a fire which had smoldered for ten years.

It happened to be the last piece of violence before both red and white threw aside make-believe and settled down to the ghastly struggle for supremacy. Hunters bound for Kentucky had suffered none from the Indians except as they had a brush with small raiding-parties. But when Daniel Boone undertook to convey his wife and children and the families of his friends into the wonderland the natives would have none of it. In killing his son and young Russell, along with several of their companions, the Indians were merely serving notice of no thoroughfare for home-builders.

So let us remember that Dunmore's War was the inevitable outcome of two alien races determined on the same prize, with each primed for a death-struggle by the memories of fearful wrongs. It is useless to argue which race gave the first cause for retaliation; it had been give and take between them for many years. Nor should our children's children, because of any tendency toward ancestor-worship, be allowed to believe that the whites were invincible and slaughtered more natives than they lost of their own people.

There were white men as merciless and murderous as any Indians, and some of these had a rare score of killings to their discredit. Yet in a man-for-man account the Indians had all the best of it. Veterans of Braddock's War insisted that the frontier lost fifty whites for each red man killed. Bouquet and other leaders estimated the ratio in Pontiac's War to have been ten to one in favor of the Indians.

This reduction proved that the settlers had learned something from the lessons taught in the old French War. Our people on the border knew all this and they were confident that in the struggle now upon them they would bring the count down to one for one.* So let the youngsters of the new day learn

---

*It is estimated that the whites lost three to the Indians' one in Dunmore's War.

the truth; that is, that the backwoodsmen clung to their homes although suffering most hideously.

Virginia understood she must sustain the full brunt of the war, inasmuch as she comprised the disputed frontier. It was upon Virginia that the red hatred centered. I never blamed the Indians for this hate for white cabins and cleared forests and permanent settlements. Nor should our dislike of the Indians incite sentimental people, ignorant of the red man's ways and lacking sympathy with our ambitions, to denounce us as being solely responsible for the brutal aspects such a struggle will always display.

It should also be remembered that the men of Pennsylvania were chiefly concerned with trade. Their profits depended upon the natives remaining undisturbed in their ancient homes. Like the French they would keep the red man and his forests unchanged.

Naturally they disapproved of any migrations over the mountains; and they were very disagreeable in expressing their dissatisfaction. We retorted, overwarmly doubtless, by accusing our northern sister of trading guns and powder to the Indians for horses stolen from Virginia. There was bad blood between the two colonies; for history to gloss over the fact is to perpetrate a lie. Fort Pitt, recently renamed Fort Dunmore by the commandant, Doctor John Connolly, controlled the approach to the

Ohio country. It was a strong conditional cause of the war, peculiar as the statement may sound to those born long after the troublesome times of 1774.

Pennsylvania accused our royal governor of being a land-grabber and the catspaw or partner of land-speculators. His Lordship was interested in land-speculation and so were many prominent Virginians. It is also true that claims under Virginia patents would be worthless if Pennsylvania controlled the junction of the Monongahela and the Alleghany Rivers and sustained her claims to the surrounding country.

It is another fact that it was the rifles of Virginia which protected that outlying region, and that many of the settlers in the disputed territory preferred Virginia control. Every one realized that should our militia push the Indians back and win a decisive victory our claims would be immensely strengthened. And through Doctor Connolly we were already handling affairs at Fort Pitt.

Because of these and other facts there was an excellent chance for an intercolonial war. I am of the strong opinion that an armed clash between the hotheads of the two provinces would have resulted if not for the intervention of the Indian war.

At the beginning of hostilities the Indians proclaimed they would whip Pennsylvania and would roast Virginians. However, when Benjamin Speare, his wife and six children were massacred on Dun-

kard Creek early in June, with similar bloody murders being perpetrated at Muddy Creek, all on Pennsylvania soil, by John Logan, the Mingo chief, there was less foolish talk north of the line.

All these thoughts of raids and reprisals, of white striving to outdo red in cruelty, may seem to harmonize but ill with that soft June morning, the flight of the redstart, the song of the oriole and the impish chatter of the squirrels. Beech and oak urged one to rest in the shade; the limpid waters of the river called for one to strip and bathe.

To heed either invitation incautiously invited the war-ax to be buried in the head. However, we of the border always had had the Indian trouble, and each generation had taken its pleasure with a wary eye and ready weapons. Although the times were very dangerous and I was serving as scout for thirty-three cents a day I could still enjoy the sweet aromas and sympathize with the song of birds and yet keep an eye and ear open for that which concerned my life.

In ascending the Monongahela I had seen many settlers crossing the river to make the eastern settlements. I was told that a thousand men, women and children had crossed during the space of twenty-four hours. Down on the Clinch and Holston the settlers were either "forting" or fleeing.

Much of this retirement was compelled by the sad lack of powder and lead, even of guns. More

than one settler depended entirely upon ax or scythe for protection. Such were prevented from using the advantage of their stout walls and could do the foe no mischief until after the door had been battered down, when of course all the advantage shifted to the side of the invader.

By this I do not mean to disparage such tools as implements of war. A sturdy fellow with both hands gripping a scythe can do an amazing amount of damage at close quarters, as more than one Shawnee war-party has learned.

Briefly summed up, there were dissensions between some of the colonies over the land-disputes; sparks were flying between the colonies and the mother-country; every day brought gruesome news from the back-country; there was a scarcity of guns and ammunition; militia captains were eagerly stealing one another's men to fill their quotas.

Yet regardless of all these troubles let it be understood that for once the borders welcomed war and insisted upon it. As early as March, a month before the Pipe and Yellow Creek outrages, the Williamsburg *Gazette* printed an address to Lord Dunmore, stating that "an immediate declaration of war was necessary, nay inevitable." Not only did the whites want the war, but the natives also were eager for it.

But enough of whys and wherefores, as they make poor story-telling, and leave me, Basdel Morris,

overlong in quitting the thicket about my tree. And yet the wise man always looks backward as well as forward when entering on a trail, and children yet unborn may blaze a better trace if they understand what lies behind them.

I ate my breakfast there in the thick growth, packing my hungry mouth with parched corn and topping off with a promise of turkey, once I drew beyond the danger-belt. Trying to make myself believe my appetite was satisfied, I began the delicate task of leaving cover without leaving any signs. My horse was a fourth of a mile from my tree, so that in finding him the Indians would not find me.

The river sang a drowsy song a short distance from my tree and down a gentle slope. I knew of a spring beneath its bank, and I was impatient to taste its cold waters. I moved toward it slowly, determined that if an Indian ever secured my long black hair it would not be because he caught me off my guard. With ears and eyes I scouted the river-bank.

The flights and songs of birds and the boisterous chatter of the squirrels now became so many helps. There were no intruders in the grove of beech. There was no one between me and the river. At last I passed under some overhanging boughs and slipped down the bank to the water's edge.

Once more I searched both banks of the river, the

Cheat, and then ventured to drink. Like an animal I drank a swallow, then threw up my head and glanced about. It took me some time to drink my fill, but I was not tomahawked while at the spring. At last I was convinced I had the bank to myself; and satisfied that the screen of overhanging boughs screened me from any canoe turning a bend up- or down-stream I removed my clothes and very softly slipped into the water.

There could be no hilarious splashing nor swimming, but the silent immersion was most refreshing. It was while supine on my back with only my nose and toes above water that I received my first alarm for that morning. My position being recumbent I was staring up at the sky and in the direction of up-stream, and I saw a speck.

It was circling and from the west a smaller speck was hastening eastward. A third tiny speck showed on the southern sky-line. Turkey-buzzards. The one circling had sighted dead beast or man. The others had seen the discoverer's maneuvers advertising his good luck; and now each scavenger in hastening to the feast drew other scavengers after him.

I crawled ashore and hurriedly began slipping into my few garments. I drew on my breeches and paused for a moment to part the shrubbery and stare into the sky. I was startled to observe the buzzards —there were three of them now—were much

nearer, as if following something. I pulled on my leggings and finished fitting my moccasins carefully about the ankles to keep out all dust and dirt and took my second look.

The buzzards were five, and in making their wide circles they had again cut down the distance. Then it dawned upon me that they were following something in the river. I watched the bend, the buzzards ever circling nearer, their numbers continually being augmented by fresh arrivals. At last it came in sight—a canoe containing one man.

Hastily drying my hands on my hunting-shirt, I picked up my rifle and drew a bead on the distant figure. The man was an Indian and was allowing the canoe to drift. But why should the turkey-buzzards follow him? As I pondered over this problem and waited to learn whether he be friendly or hostile, there came the *spang* of a rifle from my side of the river and above me.

A second shot quickly followed and I thought the figure in the canoe lurched to one side a bit. Still there was no attempt made to use the paddle. The shrill ear-splitting scream of a panther rang out, and this like the two shots was on my side of the river. That the Indian made no move to escape was inexplicable unless the first shot had killed him outright.

The canoe was deflected toward my hiding-place, and I expected to hear another brace of shots from above me. But there was no more shooting, and

the canoe swung in close enough for me to observe the Indian was holding something between his teeth. I now recognized him as a friendly native, a Delaware; and anxious to protect him from those lurking on the bank I showed myself and softly called:

"Bald Eagle is in danger! Paddle in here."

He paid no attention to my greeting, although the canoe continued its approach until it grounded against the bank. I slipped down to the water to urge him to come ashore and take cover. He was a well-known chief, and for years very friendly to the whites. The thing he held in his mouth was a piece of journey-cake, only he was not eating it as I had first supposed. As I gained the canoe I noticed a paddle placed across it so as to support his back, and another so braced as to prop up his head.

The man was dead. There was a hideous wound at the back of his head. He had been struck down with an ax. While I was weighing this gruesome discovery the scream of the panther rang out again and close by, and the bushes parted and I wheeled in time to strike up a double-barrel rifle a young man was aiming at the chief.

"You've fired at him twice already, Shelby Cousin," I angrily rebuked. "Isn't that about enough?"

"Nothin' ain't 'nough till I git his sculp," was the grim reply; and Cousin, scarcely more than a boy, endeavored to knock my rifle aside.

"At least you ought to kill before you scalp," I said.

His lips parted and his eyes screwed up into a perplexed frown and he dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground. Holding the barrels with both hands, he stared down at the dead man.

"Some one bu'sted him with a' ax most vastly," he muttered. "An' me wastin' two shoots o' powder on the skunk!"

"Without bothering to notice the turkey-buzzards that have been following him down the river," I said.

He looked sheepish and defended himself:

"The cover was too thick to see anything overhead."

"He was a friend to the whites. He has been murdered. His killer struck him down from behind. As if murder wasn't bad enough, his killer tried to make a joke of it by stuffing journey-cake in his mouth. The cake alone would tell every red who sees him that a white man killed him."

"Only trouble with the joke is that there ain't a couple o' him," hissed young Cousin. "But the fellor who played this joke owes me two shoots of powder. I 'low he'll pay me."

"You know who he is?"

"Seen Lige Runner up along. I 'low it will be him. Him an' me look on Injuns just the same way."

"It's fellows like him and Joshua Baker and Daniel Greathouse who bring trouble to the settlements," I said.

His face was as hard as a mask of stone as he looked at me. His eyes, which should have glowed with the amiable fires of youth, were as implacably baleful as those of a mad wolf.

"You don't go for to figger me in with Baker an' Greathouse?" he fiercely demanded.

"I know your story. It wouldn't be just to rank you with them."

"Mebbe it's my story what turns other men ag'in' these critters," he coldly suggested. "There was a time when I had a daddy. He talked like you do. He called some o' the red devils his friends. He believed in 'em, too. Cornstalk, the Shawnee devil, was his good friend.

"Daddy an' mammy 'lowed we could live on Keeney's Knob till all git-out bu'sted up an' never have no trouble with friendly Injuns. That was ten years ago. I was eight years old. Then Cornstalk made his last visit. Daddy had just brought in some deer meat. Made a feast for th' bloody devils.

"I happened to be out in the woods when it was done. Or, happen like, I'd 'a' gone along t'others. There's two things that'll make me hunt Cornstalk an' his Shawnees to the back-country o' hell—my little sister, an' their overlookin' to wipe me out."

He turned and stood by the canoe, glaring down

at the dead man. All Virginia was familiar with the terrible story of the Cousin massacre at Keeney's Knob. Fully as tragic and horrible to me, perhaps, was the terrible change in the only survivor. He became an Injun-killer as soon as he was able to handle a rifle; and a Virginia boy of twelve was ashamed when he failed to bring down his squirrel shot through the head.

At eighteen Cousin was hated and feared by the Ohio tribes. He was not content to wait for Shawnee and Mingo to cross the river, but made frequent and extremely hazardous trips into their country. His panther-scream had rung out more than once near the Scioto villages to proclaim a kill.

Isaac Crabtree was a killer, but his hate did not make him rash. Jesse Hughes would have been one of our best border scouts if not for his insane hatred of Indians. He killed them whenever he met them; nor did he, like Crabtree, wait until the advantage was all on his side before striking. William White, William Hacker and John Cutright massacred five inoffensive Indian families at Bulltown on the Little Kanawha as a reprisal for the Stroud family, slain on Elk River.

Elijah Runner, who Cousin believed had killed Bald Eagle, was yet another with an insatiable thirst for red blood. Many others were notorious Injun-killers. Some were border ruffians; some were driven to the limits of hate because of scenes they

had witnessed or losses they had suffered. But none was like Shelby Cousin.

Other killers would drink and make merry at times, keeping their hate in the background until a victim appeared. Young Cousin carried his hate in his face as well as in his heart at all times. There was nothing on earth, so far as I ever learned, no friendships, no maiden's smile, which could divert him from the one consuming passion of his life.

His mention of his sister revealed the deepest depth of his anguish. His parents were beyond all suffering and the need of pity. His sister, a year older than he, had been carried off. The pursuers found her clothing by a creek near the ruined cabin; but it had never been proved that she was dead. It was this, the uncertainty of her fate, which daily fed the boy's hate and drove him to the forest, where he sought to learn the truth and never relinquished an opportunity to take his revenge.

"If Lige Runner done for him he sure did a good job," Cousin muttered. "He sure did make tomahawk improvements on him."*

"You never kill in or near the settlements as some of them do," I said.

His eyes closed and what should have been a

*Tomahawk improvements. Settlers often took possession by blazing trees with axes and carving their names thereon. Such entry to land was not legal, but usually was recognized and later made valid by legal process. Such was the claim made to the site of modern Wheeling, West Virginia, by Ebenezer Silas, and Jonathan Zane in 1770.

rarely handsome boyish face, a face to stir the heart of any maiden to beating faster, was distorted with the pain he was keeping clamped down behind his clenched teeth.

"That's only because o' what I seen at Keeney's Knob," he hoarsely whispered. "When I meet one of 'em in a settlement I skedaddle afore I lose my grip. I mustn't do anything that'll fetch a parcel of 'em down to carry off some other feller's little sister. If I know'd she was dead——"

"If you'd stop killing long enough to question some of the Shawnees you might learn the truth."

He shook his head slowly, and said:

"I stopped—just afore the killin' at Baker's Bottom. Kept my Injun alive all night. But he wouldn't tell."

I shuddered at the cold-bloodedness of him.

"You tortured him and perhaps he knew nothing to tell," I said.

"If he didn't know nothin' it was hard luck for him," he quietly agreed. "But I was sartain from things he had boasted that he was at the Knob that day. What you goin' to do with this varmint?"

And he nodded toward the dead voyager.

"My business won't allow me to take the time necessary to dig a grave where his friends can't find him or wild animals dig him out. We'll set him afloat again and hope he'll journey far down the

river before his friends find him. He was friendly to us——"

"Friendly ——" interrupted the boy. "So was Cornstalk friendly!"

I removed the journey-cake from the grinning mouth and placed the rigid figure in the bottom of the canoe. Before I could push the craft into the current young Cousin grunted with satisfaction and pointed to two bullet-holes, close together, just back of the ear.

"Knew I must hit pretty close to where I was shootin'," he muttered as he made up the bank.

I shoved the canoe from shore and called after him: "If you will wait until I get my horse we might travel together."

He waved his hand in farewell and informed me: "I've got some business west o' here. It's out o' your path if you're makin' for the Greenbriar."

"But a bit of gossip. I'm just back from Fort Pitt," I said.

He halted and leaned on his rifle and stared at me with lack-luster eyes, and in a monotonous voice said:

"Ed Sharpe, Dick Stanton, Eph Drake an' Bill Harrel are scoutin' the head o' Powell's Valley. Wanted me to go but the signs wa'n't promisin' 'nough. Logan says he'll take ten sculps for one. He still thinks Michael Cresap led the killin' at Baker's—an' Cresap was at Red Stone when it hap-

pened. Cresap wants to be mighty keerful he don't fall into Logan's hands alive.

"Half the folks on the South Fork o' the Clinch can't raise five shoots o' powder. Folks on Rye Cove been movin' over to the Holston, leavin' their cattle behind. Mebbe I'll scout over that way by 'n' by.

"Augusta boys ain't goin' to have any man in their militia company that stands under six feet in his moccasins. Folks between the heads o' Bluestone an' Clinch so skeered they prob'ly won't stay to lay by their corn. Injuns signs up Sandy Creek has made some o' Moccasin an' Copper Creek folks come off. I 'low that's 'bout all."

"Any signs of the Cherokees coming in?"

"Some says they will. T'others says they won't. Sort o' depends on whether they can keep Ike Crabtree from killin' of 'em off."

He threw his rifle over his shoulder and with a curt nod turned into the bushes and followed the bank to find a crossing. He was away on his fearful business; his youth was hopelessly corroded.

I scouted the spot where I had left my horse and discovered no signs of Indians. Unspanceling and mounting, I picked up my journey. I was passing through a mountainous country which contained many large meadows. These pleasant openings would accommodate many cattle if not for the Indian danger. They were thick with grass and

enough hay could be cured on them to feed large herds throughout the winter.

The bottom-lands, although smaller, were very rich. Along the hillsides I had no doubt but that grain could easily be grown. Altogether it was a most pleasing country if lasting peace ever could come to the border. While I observed the natural advantages and fancied the glades and bottoms dotted with happy cabins, I did not forget the dead Delaware floating down the river, nor ignore the probability of some of his kin discovering the murder before sundown and taking the path for reprisals.

There was no suggestion of war in the warm sunshine and busy woods-life. Birds rejoiced in their matings, and the air was most gracious with the perfume of growing things. The stirring optimism of spring lingered with me. My heart was warm to rejoin old friends, to enjoy women's company; but never a moment did I neglect to scrutinize the trace ahead.

The day passed with no hint of danger. I had the world to myself when the sun was cradled by the western ridges. I found it a wonderful world, and I believed it was never intended that any race of savages, whites or red, should hold such fair lands for hunting-preserves only.

That night, according to my custom, I spanceled my horse at a considerable distance from my camp.

I had selected a spot on top of a ridge, where the maples and walnuts grew thick. I perched a turkey in the gloaming and roasted him over a small fire. Having eaten, I walked to the edge of the growth and gazed toward the west. Across the valley a light suddenly twinkled on the side of a ridge. I first thought that hunters were camping there; and as the light increased to a bright blaze I decided there was a large company of them and that they had no fear of Indians.

But as I watched the flames grew higher. What had been a white light became a ruddy light. The fire spread on both sides. My heart began to pound and I tilted my head to listen. The distance was too far for me to hear tell-tale sounds, still I fancied I could hear the yelling of demons dancing around a burning cabin.

A dead man floating down the river; a boy seeking vengeance somewhere near the blazing home, and a scout for Virginia traveling toward the Greenbriar.

CHAPTER II

INDIAN-HATERS

I JOURNEYED up the Cheat and left its head waters and proceeded down the Greenbriar without observing any signs of the red peril which was creeping upon the country. A great gray eagle, poised at the apex of my upturned gaze, appeared to be absolutely stationary; a little brown flycatcher, darting across my path, made much commotion. Red-crested woodpeckers hammered industriously in dead wood for rations. So long as their tappings resounded ahead of me I feared no ambush.

Wherever nut-trees stood the squirrels made more noise than did the House of Burgesses when dissolved by Governor Dunmore for expressing revolutionary sentiments. A most gracious country, and because of its fairness, most fearfully beset. That which is worthless needs no sentinels. I met with no humans, white or red; but when within a few miles of Patrick Davis' home on Howard Creek I came upon a spot where three Indians had eaten their breakfast that very morning.

I knew they must be friendly to the whites as

they had not attempted to hide their temporary camp. They had departed in the direction of the creek, which also was my destination. I planned resting there over night and then crossing the main ridge of the Alleghanies during the next day, stopping the night with the Greenwood family on Dunlap's Creek.

Thence it would be an easy ride to Salem where I would find Colonel Andrew Lewis, commander of the county militia. I hoped he would provide a messenger for forwarding my despatches to Governor Dunmore in Williamsburg. I had no desire to visit the seat of government, nor was my disinclination due to the bustle and confusion of its more than a thousand inhabitants.

A mile from where the Indians had camped I came upon two white men. They were at one side of the trace and curiously busy among some rocks at the top of a fifty-foot cliff. They were hauling a rope from a deep crack or crevice in the rocks and were making hard work of it.

We discovered each other at the same moment, and they called on me to lend them a hand. Leaving my horse in the trace, I hastened over the rough ground to learn what they wanted. As I drew nearer I recognized them as Jacob Scott and William Hacker, confirmed "Injun-haters."

"How d'ye do, Morris," greeted Hacker. "Catch hold here and help haul him up."

"Who is it?" I asked, seizing the rope which was composed of leather belts and spancel-ropes.

"Lige Runner," grunted Hacker, digging in his heels and pulling in the rope hand over hand. Runner, as I have said, was another implacable foe of all red men.

"All together!" panted Scott.

My contribution of muscle soon brought Runner's head into view. We held the rope taut while he dragged himself on to the ledge.

"Did you git it?" eagerly demanded Hacker.

The triumphant grin was surety for his success down the crevice. He rose and tapped a fresh scalp dangling at his belt.

"I got it," he grimly replied. "Had to follow him most to the bottom where his carcass was wedged between the rocks. Morning, Morris. Traveling far? Seen any Injun-signs on the way?"

I shook my head, preferring they should not learn about the three Indians making for Howard's Creek.

"What does all this mean, Runner? Do scalps grow at the bottom of holes?"

"This one seemed to," he answered with a deep chuckle. "Didn't git a fair crack at him, as he was running mighty cute. Rifle held fire the nick of a second too long. I knew he was mortal hit, but he managed to reach this hole. Then the skunk jumped

in a-purpose to make us all this bother to git his scalp."

"Who was he?"

"Don't know. He was a good hundred and fifty yards away and going like a streak when I plugged him. It's too dark down in the hole to see anything."

"For all you know he was a friendly."

"We never see no friendlies," Hacker grimly reminded.

"'Cept when they're dead," ironically added Scott. "Our eyesight's terribly poor when they're alive."

"I call it dirty business. I wouldn't have hauled on the rope if I had known."

Runner lowered at me and growled:

"You're too finicky. A' Injun is a' Injun. Sooner they're all dead, the better. I kill 'em quicker'n I would a rattlesnake. A rattler gives notice when he's going to strike."

"If you've killed a friendly this work will cause much suffering among the outlying cabins."

"Bah! If we took good corn cakes and honey to the red devils they'd kill us every chance they got. We ain't forgitting what happened at Keeney's Knob, at the Clendennin farm on the Greenbriar; nor the scores of killings up in Tygart's Valley, and in other places. Give 'em the pewter every chance you can! That's my religion."

"That's the talk, Lige!" cried Scott. "Ike Crabtree would 'a' liked to been in this fun."

"He'll feel cut up when he hears about our luck," said Hacker.

"Crabtree's feelings do him credit," added Runner. "But his natural hankering to raise hair is stronger'n his courage when he thinks there's more'n one Injun to dicker with. Young Shelby Cousin would be the best one for this business if it wa'n't for his fool notions about killing near a settlement."

"Cousin says you killed old Bald Eagle. I saw the Delaware floating down the Cheat in his canoe."

Runner laughed in huge delight, and cried:

"The world's mighty small after all. Ain't it the truth! So you seen him? Did he have the chunk of johnny-cake in his meat-trap?"

"He was friendly to the whites and harmless. It was a poor piece of work."

"The reason why we didn't sculp him was that it would 'a' spoiled the joke," defended Hacker. "With his hair on and the johnny-cake in his mouth, folks would think he was still alive till they got real close."

"The three of us done that," informed Scott, as though jealous of Runner's receiving all the credit.

"Morris means it was a poor job because the chief was said to be friendly to white folks," explained Runner, scowling at me.

"Morris, you'd better go up to David's and tell Ike Crabtree that," jeered Hacker.

"Crabtree is there, is he?" I said, deeply concerned for the safety of the three Indians.

"He started for there. He'll feel mighty well cut up when he hears about us and this Injun in the hole," gravely declared Scott.

"How many cabins on Howard's Creek now?" I asked; for a cabin could be put up in a few hours and the population at any point might greatly increase in the space of twenty-four hours. I had no desire to quarrel with the three men, and I realized that there was nothing I could say which would change their natures, or make them act in a human manner toward friendly Indians.

Runner was inclined to harbor resentment and refused to answer me. Hacker, however, readily informed me:

"There was five when I come through there last. With outlying settlers pouring in, there may be a dozen by this time. All I know is that the call's gone out for fifteen or twenty miles, asking every one to come in to the big log-rolling.

"Davis and t'others swear they won't come off the creek till they've harvested their corn. So they're going to have a rolling and build a fort and stick it out. We fellers reckon we'll go up there and have a hand in the fun-making."

"Up near the Pennsylvania line and west of the

Cheat a cabin was burned a few nights ago," I said, hoping they might feel disposed to scout north in search of Indians who were not friendly.

If the trio should go to Howard's Creek and happen upon the three Indians I feared that nothing could prevent another ghastly affair. Possibly Crabtree already had struck, but I hoped not. The men were interested in my news and listened closely. I continued:

"It was a cabin. I know that, although I was too far away to investigate. I have a notion that young Cousin was somewhere near it when it burned."

"Then you can bet the young cuss gave his panther-screech and made his kill," exclaimed Scott.

"If you men want to do the settlers on Howard's Creek a good turn you might scout up there and look for signs."

"I 'low the signs wouldn't be very fresh now," said Runner. "Show me a fresh footing and I'm keen to follow it. But just looking round after the skunks move on ain't my notion of a good time."

"I 'low Lige is right," decided Hacker. "If the reds was there a few nights ago they may be down this way by this time. Either that or they've sneaked back across the Ohio. I 'low there'll be more up to the creek."

"That's my notion," chimed in Scott. "Show us fresh signs and we're like good dogs on the scent. We'd better go to the rollin'."

"There's many Indians who need killing badly," I said. "But if you men persist in killing friendly Indians we'll have the Delawares joining in with the Shawnees and Mingos."

"We don't hanker for any more Moravian missionary talk," coldly warned Runner. "As for the Delawares dipping into the dish, let 'em come. Let 'em all come together! The sooner we smoke their bacon, the sooner the Holston and Clinch and Tygart's Valley will be safe for our women and children. As for that old cuss of a Bald Eagle, we're right glad you seen him. It shows others will see him. That's the sort of a notice we're serving on every red-skin in Virginia."

It was obvious they would not relinquish their plan of visiting Howard's Creek, and it was equally plain they preferred to travel without my company. So I returned to the trace and mounted and rode on.

As I neared the creek I came upon several settlers hurrying in from their isolated cabins, and I was pleased to see they had taken time to collect their few cattle and bring them along. Of the five men I talked with there were only two who had guns. The others were armed with axes and big clubs of oak.

One lean fellow carried a long sapling to the end of which he had made fast a long butcher-knife. One of the gunmen said to me that he hoped there would be "a lively chunk of a fight" although he

and his friend had only one charge of powder apiece. These two were young men, and like many of their generation they imitated the Indian to the extent of wearing thigh-leggings and breech-clouts.

The ends of the latter were passed through the belt in front and behind, and were allowed to hang down in flaps. These flaps were decorated with crude beadwork. Around their heads they wore red kerchiefs. Two of the older men had wives. These women would impress a resident of the seacoast as being stolid of face.

In reality the continuous apprehension of an Indian raid had frozen their features into a wooden expression. Their eyes were alive enough. I counted ten children, six of whom were girls. I do not think one of the youngsters was more than twelve years old.

The boys were continually bemoaning their lack of guns. The girls seemed happy over the adventure and prattled a stream about the new people they would see at the creek. I think every one of them had brought along a doll made from rags, corn-cobs or wood. The maternal was very strong in their stout little hearts.

One flaxen-haired miss consented to ride before me after my solemnly assuring her that horseback travel would not make her dollie sick. She shyly confessed her great joy in attending "rollin's." Her folks, she said, had not been invited to the last

"rollin'," although they lived within fifteen miles of it; and her daddy and mammy had been greatly incensed.

But this, fortunately, was a bee where no one waited to be invited, each settler, living far or near, having an equal equity in the work. Long before we reached the scene of activities we heard the loud voices of the men, the hilarious cries of young folks and the barking of several dogs. My little companion twisted nervously, her blue eyes wide with excitement. Then she was sliding from the horse and with her doll clutched to her side, was scampering ahead with the others.

Then we grown-ups reached the edge of the clearing. Hacker had reported five cabins. Now there were seven, and if the people continued to arrive there must soon be twice that number. At the first of it the overflow would take up quarters among those already housed, or in the fort when it was finished.

Ordinarily a settler girdled his trees and chopped them down when they were dead, and then burned them into long logs. Not until the trees were down and burned into suitable lengths were invitations to the rolling sent out. As this was an emergency rolling the usual custom could not be followed.

Some of the dead trees were being burned into sections with small fires built on top and pressed against the wood by butt-ends of logs we called

nigger-heads. Boys and girls were feeding small fuel to these fires. Charred logs left over from former rollings were being yanked out and built into the walls of the fort. As not enough seasoned timber was available for such a large structure green logs were being utilized.

The settlers behind me handed their two guns, clubs and other belongings over to the small boys, and with a nod and a word of greeting joined the workers. The women and girls looked after the cattle. Those of the women who were not working among the logs were busy in the cabins cooking large quantities of food, for we ate marvelously in those old days.

As in peaceful times, when a happy home was to evolve from the "rollin'," the usual pot-pie, composed of boiled grouse, pigeon and venison, and always with dumplings, was the principal dish of the feasting. On a stump, accessible to all who needed it, rested a squat jug containing rum.

I turned my horse loose near the fort and sought out Davis. He was inside the fort, superintending the work. The walls of this were well up. As the first need was shelter, and as the Indians might strike at any moment, no time was lost with a puncheon floor. The earth must do until the men could have a breathing-spell. Four tight walls and a stout roof was the best they could hope for.

Davis paused long enough to inform me that if

time permitted they would build the fort two stories high and stockade it with twelve-foot posts. From his worried expression and obvious anxiety to get back to his work I did not believe he had any hope of building more than a one-story shell.

When the Indians struck they would strike with a rush. They would plan on a quick assault taking the settlers by surprise. They dared not remain to conduct a prolonged siege. The fort when completed would not be any stronger than the average cabin; it would simply accommodate more defenders.

The nearest water was a spring some twenty yards from the fort. This failure to provide for a water-supply was an amazing characteristic of many frontier defenses. There was no reason why the fort should not have been built close by the spring, or even over it. I said as much to Davis, but he defended:

"It would place us too near the woods. Their fire-arrows could fall on us too easy."

I reminded him that as the fort was now they would have but little water to extinguish a fire, whereas the spring would have afforded an inexhaustible supply. However, it was too late to change their plans and I volunteered to collect kettles and tubs and organize a water-squad so there might be plenty of water in the fort each night.

"Might be a good plan," agreed Davis. "But I

'low if the Injuns come it'll be all over, one way or t'other, afore we have time to git thirsty."

I briefly explained to Davis my business as despatch-bearer, so he might understand my reason for departing in the morning. He was generous enough to insist that I ran a greater risk in crossing the mountains alone than I would encounter by remaining at the creek.

I left him and levied on kettles to be delivered after supper and then returned to the fort. I had barely arrived when the dogs began barking and several horses came running through the stumps from the north end of the clearing. Before the alarm could find expression in shouts and a semblance of defense a deep voice called from the woods:

"White men! Friends! Hacker, Scott and Runner."

A rousing cheer greeted these newcomers, and one enthusiast grabbed up the jug and ran to meet them. Each of the three drank deeply and were rewarded with more cheers. If they were murderous in their hatred they would be stout defenders. As for their attitude toward all Indians, there were but few along the border who did not have some cause for hating the natives.

This sentiment of the frontier was shown when Henry Judah, arrested for killing some friendly Indians on the South Branch, was rescued by two

hundred pioneers. After his irons were knocked off the settlers warned the authorities it would not be well to place him in custody a second time. Nor was Judah the only man thus snatched from the law.

Men like Hacker and his companions would do very little manual labor. They did not build homes, but were always roaming about the country. This trait was of value to men of the Davis type, inasmuch as the killers brought in much game when the home-makers were busy with their cabins or planting.

"Any news, Lige?" bawled Davis, his deep voice booming across the clearing and overriding the clamorous welcome of his neighbors.

"Found some footing and hoss-tracks," Runner yelled back.

"They'll be coming this way, the yaller dogs, and we're here to rub 'em up a bit!" boasted Scott.

"Jesse Hughes oughter be here," said one of the men who was notching the long logs.

"He'll be along if there's promise of a fight," assured Hacker. "Young Cousin and Ike Crabtree, too."

"I 'low them red devils would skin back to the Ohio like a burned cat if they know'd you boys was after 'em!" cried Widow McCabe, who was as strong as the average man and could swing an ax with the best of them. Her husband was killed on

the Kanawha the year before, and her hatred of Indians was as intense as that of any killer.

"They'll sure know they've met with some trouble, Missus," modestly admitted Hacker.

The three men seated themselves on a knoll and watched the busy scene. I joined them and inquired about the footing they had observed. Scott informed me they had followed the trail toward the creek and then lost it.

"It was a small party of scouts, mebbe not more'n three," he said. "We sort o' reckon that they 'lowed they might be followed and so took to water. We 'lowed it was best to hustle along here and git in front of the fighting, instead o' losing time trying to find where they quit the creek. You're sticking along, we 'low."

"No need with all you men. I must carry my despatches over the mountains to-morrow."

"Better think twice afore trying it alone. By to-morrow the mountain trace will probably be shut in by the reds," declared Hacker ominously.

"Then I must take my chances of breaking across country. His Lordship must have the despatches at the earliest possible minute."

"Of course," Runner agreed. "Wish you luck even if you got a Quaker stomick when it comes to killing the vermin. But if you want to git across you'd better start at once. Them two or three scouts shows the devils are closing in. Every hour

saved now means a dozen more chances for your hair to grow."

As I believed the footing the fellows found was left by the three Indians I had pronounced to be friendly, I was not much exercised in my mind by the warning. I did not believe the Indians would seek to cut off the settlement. They must strike and be off, and they would prefer to have the settlers in flight over the mountains, with the inevitable stragglers easily cut off, than to have them stubbornly remaining in the cabins and fort.

If time was not vital, and providing the Shawnees could bring a large force, then an encircling movement would be their game. But Cornstalk and Logan would not lead a big force into any of the valleys. They knew as well as the whites that the war was to be won by one decisive battle.

These isolated raids up and down the western valleys were simply of value in that they might unnerve the settlers and keep them from leaving their cabins to join the army Dunmore proposed to send against the Shawnee towns. And last of all I was fagged by my long ride and would have one night's unworried sleep, let the risk be ever so great.

The dinner, much belated, was now ready, and the workers were asked to assemble in and around the Davis cabin. Four men were left to do sentinel duty, and the children were told to keep on with their work and play as they would be served after

the men had eaten. Huge pot-pies were hurried from all the cabins to where the backwoodsmen were waiting to prove their appetites.

Several jugs of rum garnished the feast. The Widow McCabe contributed a scanty stock of tea, but the men would have none of it on the grounds that it did not "stick to the ribs."

My helping of pie was served on a huge china plate that had been packed over the mountains with much trouble and when every inch of room was needed for the bare necessities. Thus tenacious were the women in coming to this raw country to preserve their womanliness. I might have thought I was being favored had not Mrs. Davis frankly informed me that her few pieces of china were shunned by her men-folks on the plea the ware "dulled their sculping-knives."

Finishing my meal, I seated myself on a stump and proceeded to remove my moccasins and mend them. Davis joined me in a similar task; for while it required only two or three hours to make a pair of moccasins it was necessary to mend them almost daily. Davis greatly admired the awl I bought over the mountains, although it was no more serviceable than the one he had made from the back spring of a clasp-knife.

A settler might be unfortunate enough not to possess a gun, but there was none who did not carry a moccasin-awl attached to the strap of his shot-

pouch, a roll of buckskin for patches and some deerskin thongs, or whangs, for sewing. While we sat there barefooted and worked we discussed the pending big battle. He held what I considered to be a narrow view of the situation. He was for having every valley act on the defensive until the Indians were convinced they were wasting warriors in attempting to drive the settlers back over the mountains.

While we argued back and forth those children having finished their dinner took to playing at "Injun." The boys hid in ambush and the little girls endeavored to steal by them without being "sculped." Along the edge of the clearing were five or six sentinels. They were keeping only a perfunctory watch, their eyes and ears giving more heed to the laughter and banter than to the silent woods. At the northern end of the clearing some lovesick swain surrendered to sentiment and in a whimsical nasal voice began singing:

"Come all ye young people, for I'm going for to sing
Consarnin' Molly Pringle and her lov-yer, Reuben King."

The thin penetrating shriek of a child somewhere in the forest pricked our ears, the clear falsetto of its fright silencing the singer and leaving his mouth agape. I began drawing on my moccasins, but be-

fore I could finish a wonderful transformation had taken place in the clearing. As if the cry had been a prearranged signal, six of the young men filed silently into the woods, moving one behind the other, their hunting-shirts now inside their belts leaving their thighs bare, as if they had been so many Shawnees.

They moved swiftly and silently with no more show of confusion or emotion than if they had been setting out on routine scout-duty. The child screamed again, but not before feasters and workers had become fighting-units. Those possessing guns ran quietly in scattering groups toward the forest, leaving the women to guard the clearing and children.

And the women! They were marvelous in their spirit. With scarcely a word they caught up the axes dropped by the men and formed a long line with the children behind them. Little girls became little mothers and hurried still smaller tots to the unfinished fort.

The woodsmen advanced to the woods, the women slowly fell back, herding the youngsters behind them. As I ran my best to make up for the time lost over my moccasins I passed the Widow McCabe. I shall never forget the ferocious gleam of her slate-gray eyes, nor the superb courage of the thin lips compressed in a straight line.

She moved with the grace of a forest cat, reluc-

tant to fall back, her muscular arm swinging the heavy ax as if it were a toy. Abreast of her, and likewise refusing to retreat, was Moulton's wife, mother of three. She was a thin, frail-appearing little woman with prominent blue eyes, and her gaze was glassy as she stared at the woods, and her lips were drawn back in a snarl.

"Moulton gal missin'," ran down the line. "Git t'other younkers back."

The line began bending at the ends to form a half-circle. The distracted little mother left her place in it. Without a word to betray the anguish tearing at her heart she gathered her linsey petticoat snugly about her, and grasping an ax, ran swiftly toward the direction of the screaming. The Widow McCabe hesitated, glanced over her shoulder. Satisfied the other women had the children well grouped and close to the fort, she darted after Mrs. Moulton.

"Keep back, you women!" yelled Elijah Runner. "Stay with the children! They're letting the child scream to fetch us into a' ambush!"

This was excellent advice, but the widow and Mrs. Moulton gave it no heed. One was impelled by hate, the other by love; and as they crashed into the growth behind me each was worth a woodsman or two in hand-to-hand fighting. With unnerving abruptness a man laughed boisterously directly ahead of me. Yells and questions filled the arches of the deep wood.

"Everybody back! False alarm! Nothin' but the gal gittin' skeered," he shouted. "I'm fetchin' her in, an' th' feller what skeered her."

Explosive laughter from the men and much crude banter marked our relief. Mrs. Moulton dropped her ax and with both hands held to her face stumbled into the clearing. The Widow McCabe walked with her head bowed, the ax held limply. Although rejoicing over the child's safety, I suspected she regretted not having had a chance to use her ax.

"Here they come! Two babies!" some one shouted.

Mrs. Moulton turned and ran toward the woods again, much as a hen-partridge scurries to its young.

The bush-growth swayed and parted. First came the frightened child, and she redoubled her weeping on finding herself in her mother's arms. Behind the child came a grinning woodsman and back of him rode a tall man of very powerful build, but with a face so fat as to appear round and wearing an expression of stupidity.

It was my first glimpse of him, but I recognized him instantly from the many descriptions border men had given of him. He was known as "Baby" Kirst, and he was a Nemesis the Indians had raised against themselves, a piece of terrible machinery which their superstitions would not permit them to kill.

His intelligence was that of a child of seven.

When about that age his people were massacred on the Greenbriar and he had been left for dead with a portion of his scalp ripped off and a ghastly wound in his head. By some miracle he had survived, but with his mental growth checked. Physically he had developed muscle and bone until he was a giant in strength.

The red men believed him to be under the protection of the Great Spirit, and when they heard him wandering through the woods, sometimes weeping like a peevish child because some little plan had gone awry, more often laughing uproariously at that which would tickle the fancy of a seven-year-old, they made mad haste to get out of his path.

His instinct to kill was aroused against Indians only. Perhaps it was induced by a vague memory of dark-skinned men having hurt him at some time. Nor was he always possessed by this ungovernable rage. Sometimes he would spend a day in an Indian camp, but woe to the warrior who even inadvertently crossed his whims.

He was not skilled in woodcraft beyond the cunning necessary for surprising easy game such as turkeys, squirrels and rabbits. Regardless of his enormous appetite food was gladly given him at every cabin; for wherever he sought shelter, that place was safe from any Indian attack.

While Mrs. Moulton hurried her child to the fort and hushed its weeping with pot-pie the young men

raised a yelping chorus and came dancing into the clearing with all the prancing steps of the red men. Deep-voiced oaths and thunderous welcomes were showered upon Baby Kirst as he proudly rode among them, his huge face further distended by a broad grin.

Awkwardly dismounting from his rawbone horse, he stared around the circle and with one hand held behind him tantalizingly said:

"Got something. Sha'n't let you peek at it."

"Let's see it, Baby," coaxed Runner, his tone such as he might use in pleading with a child.

"No!" And Baby shook his head stubbornly and grinned mischievously.

" 'Lasses on mush. Heaps of it, Baby," bribed Davis.

Baby became interested. Davis repeated his offer. Slowly Baby drew from behind him the scalp of a white man. It was long, dark brown hair, burned to a yellowish white at the ends by the sun.

"That's Ben Kirby's hair!" gasped Scott, staring in horror at the exhibit. Then aside, "Good God, he ain't took to killing whites, has he?"

"Where'd you git it, Baby?" coaxed Hacker. "Davis will give you a big bowl of mush and 'lasses."

"That man had it," proudly informed Baby, and he fished from the bosom of his hunting-shirt a hank of coarse black hair.

"A Shawnee sculp or I'm a flying-squirrel!" yelled Runner. "Don't you understand it, men? Some dog of a Shawnee rubbed out Kirby. His hair's been off his head these six weeks. No wonder he ain't come in to help you folks to fort.

"Baby meets this Shawnee and gives him his needings. The red devil's sculp ain't more'n three days old. Good for you, Baby! Good boy! Give him all the 'lasses he can hold. Needn't worry about any raid s'long as he stays here, Davis. You can just take your time in finishing that fort."

"If we could only keep him!" sighed Davis.

"But you can't," spoke up a young man. "Every one has tried. A day or two, yes. Then he must go back to the woods. When the Injuns failed to finish him off they did a bad job for themselves."

"We'll keep him long's we can," said Davis. "Hi, mother! Fill the mixing-bowl with mush and cover it with sweeting."

As proud as a boy being praised by his elders, Baby started to strut to the Davis cabin, but quickly fell into a limping walk and whimpered a bit.

"Crippled on account of rheumatiz," sighed Runner. "Rheumatiz has put more hunters and fighters out of business than the Ohio Injuns ever did. And poor Baby can't remember to always sleep with his feet to the fire. If we could git him a stout pair of shoes to wear in place of them spongy moccasins it would pay us."

Kirst was too grotesque to laugh at, and the settlers were grotesque when they smiled at his ferocious appetite, and in the next moment tried to buy the protection of his presence. Let him regularly patrol a dozen miles of frontier each day, and I would guarantee no Indian would knowingly cross his path.

More than one party of red raiders had unwittingly followed his trail, only to turn in flight as if the devil was nipping after them once they glimpsed his bulky figure, heard his whimpering or his loud laughter. The men followed him to the Davis cabin, each eager to contribute to the general gossip concerning the child-man's prodigious strength.

As my horse was straying toward the west side of the clearing I went to fetch him back and spancel him near the fort. I had secured him and was about to ride him back when a rifle cracked close at hand in the woods, and I heard a voice passionately jeering:

"I 'low that cotched ye where ye lived, didn't it?"

I drove my horse through the bushes and came upon a sickening scene. An Indian man and a squaw were seated on a horse. On the ground was another Indian. A glance told me he was dead from the small blue hole through the forehead. The man and woman on the horse remained as motionless as if paralyzed.

Isaac Crabtree stood reloading his long rifle, his

sallow face twisted in a smile of vicious joy. As he rammed home the charge I crowded my horse against him and sent him sprawling. Turning to the Indians I cried:

"Ride away! Ride quick!"

"We are friendly Cherokees!" cried the woman in that tongue. "That man there is called Cherokee Billy by white men." And she pointed to the dead man.

With that she swerved the horse about, kicked her feet into his ribs and dashed away, the man clinging on behind her, his dark features devoid of expression. An oath brought my head about. Crabtree was on his feet, his hand drawing his ax, his face livid with rage.

"Curse you!" he stuttered. "Ye sp'iled my baggin' the three of 'em!"

"You've bagged Cherokee Billy, the brother of Oconostota, the great chief of the Cherokees," I wrathfully retorted. "It would have been well for the frontier if I could have arrived in time to bag you before you did it. The Cherokees have kept out of the war, but it'll be a wonder if they don't swarm up this creek when they hear of this murder."

"Let 'em come!" he yelled. "That's what we want. It'll take more'n you, Basdel Morris, to keep my paws clear of the critters once I git a bead on one of 'em. Git out of my way so's I can git my rifle. I'll have the three of 'em yet."

"If you make a move to follow them I'll shoot you," I promised.

By this time men were crashing through the bushes. Then came a louder noise and Baby Kirst, mounted on his big horse, his broad face bedaubed with molasses, burst on the scene. A dozen settlers crowded into the spot behind him. Hacker and Runner were the first to see the dead Indian. With a whoop they drew their knives and rushed in to get the scalp. I drove them back with my horse and loudly informed them:

"It's Cherokee Billy, brother of Oconostota, who can send the whole Cherokee nation against you, or hold it back."

"I don't care what Injun it is," howled Hacker. "Hair's hair. Git out the way, or you'll git acquainted with my ax. I'll have that scalp."

"Not so fast," I warned. "The hair belongs to Crabtree here. Kill your own scalps. Crabtree doesn't care to take that scalp. He knows Oconostota has a long memory." And I swung about, my rifle across the saddle and in a direct line with the murderer's chin.

"It's my kill," growled Crabtree. "Morris held me up with his gun, or I'd bagged t'other two of 'em."

"I'd like to see him hold me up when there's red meat to be run down!" snarled Runner.

There were four killers present in addition to the

irresponsible Kirst. I was helpless against them, I could not shoot a man down for proposing to follow two Indians, let the reds be ever so friendly toward the whites. But Patrick Davis had come to Howard's Creek to stay, and it was a problem he could handle. It at once developed that he did not fancy the prospect of a Cherokee reprisal. He stepped in front of Runner and in a low ugly voice said:

"You fellows quit this talk. 'Nough mischief has been done. Unless Oconostota can be smoothed down there'll be trouble from Rye Cove to Tygart's Valley. As for following t'other two, you'll reckon with me and my neighbors first."

"A dead Injun ain't worth quarreling over," spoke up Widow McCabe from the edge of the group; and her eyes glowed as they rested on Cherokee Billy.

Mrs. Moulton now came on the scene. She still had her husband, and she frantically called on her friends to prevent further bloodshed. The greater number of the men, while unwilling to criticize Crabtree for his dastardly murder, did not care to add to the Cherokees' anger, and they took sides with Davis. I believed the whole affair had ended, but Crabtree was crafty, and he caused fresh fear by reminding them:

"You folks are fools to let the only witnesses to that dawg's death git away and take word back

to the Cherokees. If Morris hadn't took a hand there wouldn't 'a' been that danger."

Many settlers were long used to classifying the red men with the wild animals along the border. Therefore, the question of killing the two fleeing Cherokees became a matter of policy, rather than of sentiment. But Davis, although he wavered, finally declared he would have none of it. He reminded his friends that they would soon be called by Dunmore to march against the Ohio tribes, and that it would not do to leave hostile Cherokees behind them to attack the valleys. Hacker, Runner, Scott and Crabtree perceived that the settlers were opposed to further bloodshed, but Crabtree still had a card to play. Turning to Baby Kirst, who was staring intently down on the dead man, he suddenly cried:

"Sweet sugar, Baby, if you ride and find two Injuns just gone away."

And he pointed in the direction taken by the man and woman. With a yelp of juvenile delight Baby slapped his horse and rode away down the valley.

"Now you've done it!" growled Davis, scowling blackly at Crabtree. "You've made trouble atween us and the Cherokees, and you've drove away the best defense against Injuns we could 'a' had."

"I don't have to have no loose-wit to stand 'tween me and Injuns," sneered Crabtree.

"You're better at killing unarmed Indians than

in putting up a real fight," I accused. "You're not fond of traveling very far from a settlement when you draw blood. Shelby Cousin was telling me down on the Cheat that you like to be near a white man's cabin when you make a kill."

His sallow face flushed red, but he had no harsh words to say against young Cousin. Without replying to me he made for the Davis cabin to get something to eat, leaving Cherokee Billy for others to bury. I noticed it was the Widow McCabe, with her slate-gray eyes half-closed and gleaming brightly, who waited on Crabtree and heaped his plate with food.

What with the interruptions and the nervous tension of the men it was after sunset before the roof of the fort was finished. It was agreed that the men with families should sleep in the fort that night with the single men occupying the cabins nearest the fort. I took up my quarters in the Davis cabin, after reminding my friends again that I must start early in the morning to cross the mountains on my way to Colonel Lewis who lived near Salem.

"Why, land sake! To Salem! Why, look here! You'll be seeing my cousin, Ericus Dale!" excitedly exclaimed Mrs. Davis.

My emotion was far greater than that expressed by Mrs. Davis, but the dusk of early evening permitted me to conceal it. It was three years since I had seen the Dales, father and daughter. They

were then living in Williamsburg. It was most astonishing that they should be now living in Salem. But this was going too fast.

It did not follow that Patricia Dale was in Salem because her father was there. In truth, it was difficult to imagine Patsy Dale being content with that little settlement under the eastern eaves of the mountains. Before I could find my tongue Mrs. Davis was informing her neighbors:

"My cousin, Ericus, ain't got many warm spots in his heart for Governor Dunmore. He's sure to be sot ag'in' this war. He's a very powerful man in the colony." Then to me, "I want you to see Patsy and tell her not to think of coming out here this summer. She's not to come till the Injuns have been well whipped."

"Coming out here?" I dully repeated.

"They was opinin' to when I last got word from 'em last March. They was at their home in Williamsburg, and the girl wrote she was going to Salem with her father, who had some trading-business to fix up. 'Spected to be there all summer, and was 'lowing to come out here with her daddy. But seeing how things is going, it won't do. Mebbe Salem even won't be safe for 'em. It won't put you out any to see her and tell her?"

I trusted to the dusk to conceal my burning cheeks. I had supposed I had secured control of myself during my three years on the border. It

would be impossible for any man who had looked into Patsy Dale's dark blue eyes to forget her; and we had been something more than friends. I promised Mrs. Davis I would do her errand, and hurried from the cabin.

The ride ahead of me suddenly became momentous. I was thrilled with the prospect of seeing Patsy again; and I was afraid the interview would disturb me vastly. To be alone and arrange my jumbled thoughts I helped drive the horses into a small inclosure, well stockaded, and watched the boys coming through the clearing to drive the cattle into their stalls in several hollow sycamores. These natural shelters, once the openings were enlarged and protected with bars, made excellent pens for the domestic animals and fowls. I was still thinking about Patsy Dale and the time when her young life touched mine when the cabin doors were barred and it was time to sleep.

CHAPTER III

OVER THE MOUNTAINS

WHEN I opened my eyes a young man was surveying the clearing through a chink above the door. This morning vigilance was customary in every cabin along the frontier and revealed the settler's realization of the ever present danger. No wonder those first men grew to hate the dark forest and the cover it afforded the red raiders. A reconnaissance made through a peephole could at the best satisfy one that no stump in the clearing concealed an Indian.

It was with this unsatisfactory guarantee that the settler unbarred his door. He could never be sure that the fringe of the woods was not alive with the enemy. And yet young men fell in love and amorously sought their mates, and were married, and their neighbors made merry, and children were born. And always across the clearing lay the shadow of the tomahawk.

Now that I am older and the blood runs colder, and the frontier is pushed beyond the mountains, I often wonder what our town swains would do if

they had to risk their scalps each time a sweetheart was visited!

The man at the door dropped back to the puncheon floor, announcing: "All clear at my end."

A companion at the other end of the cabin made a similar report, and the door was opened. Two of the men, with their rifles ready, stepped outside and swiftly swung their gaze along the edge of the forest. The early morning mists obscured the vision somewhat. A bell tinkled just within the undergrowth. Instantly the fellows outside dropped behind stumps, while we inside removed the plugs from loopholes.

"All the cattle is in," murmured a youth to me, so young his first beard had barely sprouted. "Injun trick to git us out there."

Several minutes passed, then Davis loudly called from the fort:

"It's all right! Hodge's critter wa'n't fetched in last night."

Even as he spoke the cow emerged from the bushes.

Smoke began issuing from the cabin chimneys and the women came from the fort to warm up the remains of the pot-pies, to bake corn bread and prepare mush. The men scattered through the clearing. Some chopped down bushes which might mask a foe's stealthy advance, others cleared out logs which might serve as breastworks for the raiders.

Labor did not appeal to the four killers, and their part was done when they slipped into the forest, each taking a different course, and scouted for signs and bagged some game. As my business demanded an early departure I was not expected to participate in any of these precautions.

I saw that my horse had his feed and water and led him back to the cabin, and gave my weapons their daily overhauling. Mrs. Davis paused in her labors long enough to remind me of her message to Patricia Dale. I reassured her so earnestly that she turned from her corn-bread baking in a flat pan before the open fire and stared at me rather intently. There was no dodging her keen eyes.

"See here," she exclaimed; "you've met Patsy already, I 'low."

I hesitated between the truth and a lie, and then nodded my head. She brushed a limp strand of hair from her face, and in so doing left a smut-streak across her nose, and half-closed her eyes while a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth.

"I can't say yet whether you're lucky, or just the opposite," she demurely remarked.

A loud call from the forest relieved my answering this insinuating remark, and I stepped outdoors to find the men leaving their work and the women leaving their cooking. "White man coming!" bawled a young man.

"Ain't any of the scouts," said Davis. "Better

gather the children in. White man sure enough, but it may be one of the renegade breed. Surveyors from the Kanawha say Tavenor Ross is out with the reds ag'in."

There was no haste or confusion in preparing for this possible attack led by a white man. The children scuttled to their mothers; the men slowly fell back to fort and cabins. The fact that four Indian-haters were carefully scouting the woods satisfied us that no enemy could get very close without being fired upon. The white man called again. This time he was answered from two directions.

"It's all right," shouted Davis. "Ike Crabtree answered him. So did Lige Runner. Crabtree never would 'a' yipped till sure there wa'n't no Injun waiting to be shot down. Prob'ly some one from the Holston."

"Hooray!" howled a seventeen-year-old lad, who painted his face in addition to wearing Indian leggings. "It's Jesse Hughes!"

His endorsement of the passionate, reckless man evoked more enthusiasm from the younger men than from their elders. So implacable was Hughes in his hatred of the natives that he was incapable of any self-restraint. His participation in the massacre of the Bulltown families had made him a well-known character wherever Indian-fighters met.

Crabtree loved to kill Indians, but he always weighed his chances and never scorned an advan-

tage. Hughes killed on sight, whether in a settlement or in the woods, whether the act brought one or a score of dusky avengers on his trail. Nor did it matter if the Indian be friendly to the whites and known to be perfectly harmless. His skin condemned him.

Although a master of woodcraft and possessing a knowledge of western Virginia equaled by few men, Hughes was never asked to lead a command of rangers sent to rescue prisoners, or punish a village. He was too irresponsible. He would imperil the lives of a score of friends bent on a surprise attack by firing upon the first savage he saw.

The young men saw in him the successful killer. Their elders preferred to travel the forests without him. His presence in a settlement once war came to the frontier, however, was always desirable, as in case of a fight he would do the enemy much damage.

When he rode from the forest the four scouts came with him; and there was no question as to their admiration of the fellow. Greetings were called out by men and women. He saw me mounted and some one told him of my journey. He rode up to me and warned me to be watchful as he had found tracks a few miles south of the mountain-trace I proposed following.

His errand at Howard's Creek was to secure a few men and attempt to cut off this band. Eager queries for news induced him to say he had just

come from Clinch River, and that Captain William Russell, in charge of the rangers along the Clinch, had started Daniel Boone and Michael Stoner for the Falls of the Ohio to warn the surveyors along the river that the Indians were out and would soon be attacking the frontier and combing the Kentucky country clean.

With much gusto he added that three Cherokees had been killed recently at the head of the Clinch. The thoughtless, in unison with Hacker and his companions, cheered this announcement most lustily. The men with families looked very grave. Of Baby Kirst, Hughes had seen no signs.

His report of Indian-signs near my route over the mountains influenced me to return to the cabin and check up my ammunition more carefully. I spread a double handful of small bullets on the table, running seventy to the pound, and let each slip through my fingers to make sure none was irregular. Only those which were round and smooth were returned to the pouch.

My flints and greased linen patches were examined a second time. An aged man, known as Uncle Dick, came in and watched me curiously, and grinned in approval of my caution. It was seldom a man reached his advanced age on the frontier. I had never heard Uncle Dick's last name, nor do I believe there was any one on the creek who had heard it.

According to rumor he had gone against some law in South Carolina and had fled to the frontier. Despite his many years he was sturdy and strong, but his failing eyesight made him dependent upon knife and ax. Much travel in wet weather had crippled him with rheumatism, and he remained close to whatever settlement he happened to visit.

"Fill the breast o' yer shirt with hunks o' corn cake, younker. Be sure yer ax is hitched so it won't be snagged from the loop when ye ride hellitiflicker through the bushes," he warned me.

I nodded, and he seated himself on a three-legged stool and whetted a long knife against one of the fireplace stones, and mumbled:

"Don't make no differ about me, but for the sake o' these younkers here such men as love killin' Injuns oughter keep clear o' the settlements an' do their stent on t'other side the Ohio. Old Cornstalk's powerful keen to git them fellers. When he hears they're here at the creek he's likely to strike quick an' mighty pert. Wal, if they come an' I can make it hand-grips with 'em I 'low there'll be some new Injuns in the Happy Huntin'-grounds."

When I bid the people good-by and received their kindly wishes for a safe journey, Uncle Dick was still at the fireplace, trying to improve the razor-edge of his blade.

I rode through the woods without spending any time in looking for signs. Runner and his mates

had scouted a circle around the clearing in a thorough fashion, and I could spare my eyes until I reached the first slope of the mountains. When the path began to ascend and I was afforded a better view of the heavens, thunder-clouds were piling in sullen massiveness above the western horizon.

The heat was very oppressive. The dull rumble of thunder came across the valley behind. It was as much of a vibration as a sound, something to be felt as well as heard. The song-birds were keeping close to the thickets and fluttering about nervously. By the time I was well committed to the first rugged ascent, a yellowish gray wall filled the western sky. Across this the lightning played.

As the curtain of rain drove in toward the Greenbriar I knew that any savages lurking west of Howard's Creek would be bothered to keep their priming dry. No rain fell on my path, however, and at no time did I lose the early morning sun. On gaining a higher elevation I could see the storm was following the valley down to the head waters of the Clinch.

I had not neglected Uncle Dick's advice in regard to provisions, and the front of my loose hunting-shirt held a bag of corn cakes and some cooked venison. On reaching the first slope I had watched carefully for the tracks Hughes had seen south of the trace, but found none.

There could be no question of Hughes' ability to

read Indian-signs; and his warning recalled the Grisdols to my mind. These people—two brothers and two children—had their cabin in a hollow close by a tumbling brook and to one side of the trace. I planned to make a slight detour and pass a word with them and to warn them to be watchful.

The fact that Hughes had found signs near the mountains would indicate the Indians had planned a raid against some isolated home, and as there was no footing in the trace I followed, it might easily be that the enemy had entered lower down.

Along toward the noon hour I topped a ridge and decided I would halt and eat at the first spring or brook I came to. My horse, an old campaigner in wilderness work, pricked his ears as we began dipping down the gentle slope. I studied the path ahead and the timbered slopes on both sides to discover the cause of this attention.

The animal was intelligent. I knew it could be no wild creature as there was no suggestion of fear in the attentive ears. Dissatisfied at remaining in ignorance, I reined in to investigate more carefully. Almost at once the horse swung his head to the right and gazed curiously. On this side the space was bordered by a beech grove. Owing to the rank bush-growth lining the path, little could be seen of the grove from any point below where I had halted until a brook, which cut the path, was reached.

I leaned forward and looked between the horse's

ears and discovered a bear down in the hollow, nosing about for nuts and grubs on the bank of the brook. A bear was always acceptable meat to a settler, and I at once decided to stalk the brute and pack his carcass to the Grisdol cabin.

After the first moment he passed behind some trees, but as I continued to glimpse him I knew he had not taken alarm. I slid from my horse and started him down the trace, and then ducked into the grove and rapidly descended toward the brook. I had no fear of my horse losing himself, as he would make for the stream where I would join him within a few minutes.

As I flitted from tree to tree I repeatedly sighted the animal as he poked his nose about in search of ants or grubs, and yet when I reached a point within sixty or seventy-five yards of where he should have been feeding I could not locate him.

A half-formed suspicion popped into my mind from nowhere. My horse had shown no nervousness in drawing nearer to the bear. The bushes prevented my seeing the horse, but I could hear him as he quickened his pace to reach the tumbling brook. Now for a second I saw the bear again, and my suspicion grew stronger.

The brute impressed me as being very lean, whereas the season was enough advanced to have grown some fat on his bones. I was fairly startled next to behold the creature emerge from behind a tree

and walk upright toward the opening made by the brook, cutting across the trace. Had I not been partly primed for the surprise I should have been astounded at my second discovery; the bear was armed with a gun.

Expecting to behold me on the horse when the animal reached the brook the fellow's only thought was to remain unseen by any one in the trace. He halted behind a tree, but in full view of me, and standing with his left side exposed to me. Had I the instincts of a killer I would have shot him forthwith, and as he was obviously stalking me, having discovered I was traveling over the trace, I would have been justified. As it was I whistled shrilly.

Like a flash the bearskin fell back and a painted Shawnee wheeled to face me. Even as he turned his smooth-bore banged away and half a dozen buckshot rained through the branches over my head. He was slipping behind the tree when I fired.

He went down with a foot and part of his leg exposed. Controlling an impulse to close in I reloaded, taking great care in wrapping the greased patch about the bullet. I believed I had done for him, but to make sure I sent another pellet through the exposed foot. It twitched, as a dead limb will, but without muscular reaction. Reloading, and circling warily to avoid being taken by surprise by any companion, I reached the beech. My first shot had caught him through the base of the neck, killing instantly.

He wore a necklace of bear's claws and was hideously painted. He had the snake totem on his chest and was nude except for his breech-clout and moccasins. Fastened to his clout were four awful exhibits of his predaceous success—four scalps. One was gray, another streaked with gray, and two —oh, the pity of it—were soft and long.

I removed them and placed them in the roll of buckskin that I carried for moccasin-patches. And my heart being hardened, I scalped the murderer with never a qualm. No warning was longer needed at the Grisdol cabin. The Indians had struck.

Furtively scanning the grove, I stole to the trace where my horse stood fetlock-deep in the brook. The dead warrior had known of my coming, or of some one's coming, and had had time to masquerade as a bear. He had thought to catch his victim off his guard.

The four scalps proved the raiders were out in numbers, for a small party would not venture so far east. But the dead warrior's attempt to ambush me in a bearskin also proved he was working alone for the time being. Yet gunshots carry far, and I might expect the Shawnees to be swarming into the hollow at any moment.

Mounting my horse, I turned north, left of the trace, and picked a course where no trail ran, and from which I could occasionally catch a glimpse of the path some fifty feet below. I discovered no

signs of the enemy, and there was no way of telling whether they were ahead or behind me. That they must have heard the roar of the smooth-bore and the whip-like crack of my Deckhard was not to be doubted. Nor would they fail to guess the truth, inasmuch as the rifle had spoken last.

It became very difficult to keep along the side of the slope and I dismounted and led the horse. The prolonged howl of a wolf sounded behind. My horse was greatly afraid of wolves, yet he did not draw back and display nervousness. I increased my pace, then halted and half-raised my rifle as there came a shuffling of feet above me, accompanied by a tiny avalanche of forest mold and rotten chestnuts. I rested the rifle over the saddle and endeavored to peer through the tangle of beech and inferior growth which masked the flank of the slope.

The sliding, shuffling sound continued with no attempt at concealment that I could discover; and yet there was nothing to shoot at. Suddenly the noise ceased. I was still staring toward the spot where it had last sounded when a calm voice behind me called out:

"They're after you."

It was Shelby Cousin, with the hate of the border making his young face very hard and cruel.

"I've been scouting 'em," he informed me. "I seen you take to the side o' this ridge. I seen 'em streamin' down the trace. They picked up your

trail mighty smart. Now they're scattered all along behind you."

I opened the roll of buckskin and disclosed the terrible trophies. He straightened and threw his head back, and for a moment stood with his eyes closed, his slight figure trembling violently. Then he fiercely whispered:

"How'd you git these from the devils?"

There was an expectant glare in his gaze. I showed him the hair of the Shawnee.

"Good! Good!" he repeated exultantly as he gloated over the repulsive thing. Then gloomily:

"But why couldn't I 'a' took it? Luck's been ag'in' me for days. Found a burned cabin after I quit you on the Cheat, an' 'lowed to ambush the party when they made for the Ohio. 'Stead o' goin' to their villages they fooled me by strikin' across to here. Now they've made this kill! Who be they?"

"The Grisdols. Only a short distance from here. Two men and the two children. No women. I knew them. I must go there and bury them and these scalps."

"I'll help," he mumbled. "I ain't heard no discovery-yell yet. They're still huntin' for your signs along this ridge." Trailing his double-barrel rifle, he took the lead and began a diagonal descent to the trace I had abandoned. I murmured a protest, but he assured me:

"They're all behind us. We can make quicker

time in the trace. They'll hop on to your trail sure's shootin'. Speed is what we hanker for."

His woodcraft was remarkable. He seemed to possess the gift of seeing that which was concealed. With a glance he would observe land formations and the nature of the growth, and confidently circle a heavy grove and tell me what would be the nature of the traveling beyond, and whether wet or dry.

"We could slide down into the trace in a minute any time, but I don't want to take to it till we round the bend ahead; then we'll be out o' sight o' the reds strung along the ridge."

He had halted as he explained this and I was almost abreast of him, and he startled me by whipping up his rifle and firing. As the shot rang out he rejoiced:

"One!"

I had heard nothing, seen nothing, and yet he had both heard and seen, and had made his kill.

"No use coverin' up any longer," he said. "They're closin' in. Make for the trace shortest way. Hold back once you hit it for me to come up. There's not more'n two or three close at hand, but the whole kit an' b'ilin' know we're here."

The spiteful *spang* of his rifle barely interrupted the woods life close about us. Only for a moment did the squirrels cease their chatter. A grouse drummed away in alarm, but only for a short flight.

No cries of rage, nor war-whoops, warned that the enemy were closing in on us. Had I been new to the border I should have disbelieved my companion's statement. Leading the horse, I started down the bank while Cousin climbed higher.

It was not until my horse slid down a ten-foot bank that I heard a hostile sound—the rush of many feet through last year's dead leaves. I heard the Deckhard fired once, and instantly the side of the ridge was as quiet as a death-chamber. Then came the scream of a panther, Cousin's way of announcing a kill.

They must have attempted rushing him, thinking his rifle was empty; for he fired again, and once more gave voice to his war-cry. Then the old eternal quiet of the forest dropped back in place. Until I heard a Shawnee scalp-cry I could rest easy as to my companion. I slipped into the trace and mounted, and pushed ahead.

The Indians were abreast of me and there was the danger of their cutting into the trace ahead. That they had not followed at my heels made me believe they were concentrating all their energies on making a surround and killing, or capturing their much feared enemy. They would prefer to dance Cousin's scalp than to dance a dozen of men of my caliber.

There were no more shots up the ridge, and I found it hard to decide just what gait I should permit my horse to take. I could not leave the boy

behind, nor did I care to risk being intercepted. I was worrying my mind into a fine stew over this point when the bushes stirred ahead. I dropped to the ground behind the horse, but it was young Cousin. He motioned for me to hurry.

"You dodged them!" I said.

"Black Hoof's band. They're hard to dodge," he whispered, striding rapidly along and swinging his head from side to side. "How far to the Grisdol cabin?"

"Two miles."

"Then ride for it. I'll run at your stirrup. We'll need that cabin if it ain't been burned. I 'low it'll be a close race."

There was no sign of pursuit. I was no novice in Indian warfare, but in this instance I scarcely believed the Shawnees would draw near enough to make the chase interesting. So far as I could observe Cousin had succeeded in stealing away from them, and there was no Indian who could overtake him, especially if he ran at my stirrup.

"They've took four sculps on this side the valley," he murmured as he loped along at my side. "I bagged three on 'em. You fetched one. Black Hoof is too big a chief to call it quits. He's back there leadin' the chase. So I 'low it'll be close."

A curious little thrill chilled my spine. Catahecassa, or Black Hoof, was one of the most redoubtable and resourceful savages to be found in the

Shawnee nation. If below Cornstalk's intellectual plane he made up for much of any such discrepancy by his fiery courage and deep cunning.

The long-drawn howl of a wolf sounded up the slope on our left and was soon answered by a similar call directly in our rear. For a third time the signal menaced us, on our right and at a considerable distance.

"They're still scoutin' the ridge for me," murmured Cousin, his lean face turning to the left. "The heft of 'em are comin' along the trace behind us. Those over to the right are hustlin' to find out what's up. We must git along faster!"

My mount responded eagerly, for he sensed the danger. And it was wonderful to observe how Cousin kept up, with one hand on my stirrup, the other holding the rifle. We were well beyond the brook where I shot my Shawnee, and within half a mile or less of the Grisdol cabin, when our flight was interrupted for a few moments by the behavior of my horse.

It was just as we turned from the main trace to strike into the path leading to the cabin that the animal bolted sidewise, crowding Cousin deep into the bushes. I reined in and stared down on a terrible sight—that of the four Grisdols. They lay in the path, head to head, in the form of a cross. I felt my stirrup shake as Cousin's hand rested on it. He gave a little gasping sob and whispered:

"How near to the cabin now?"

"Less than half a mile," I told him as I soothed my horse and permitted him to pick his way around the dead.

Once more we were off, but now Cousin ran behind, for the way was winding and narrow, and at places the overhanging boughs tried to brush me from the saddle.

There was no need of glancing back to make sure my companion was keeping up, for his impatient voice repeatedly urged me to make greater speed.

"If the cabin ain't standin' we've got to have 'nough of a lead to let us lose 'em in the woods," he reminded.

The path completed a detour of some tangled blackberry bushes and ended in a natural opening, well grassed.

"There it is! The roof is partly burned!" I encouraged.

"The walls stand. The door's in place. Faster!"

Across the opening we raced. From the woods behind arose a ferocious yelling. The Shawnee were confident they had driven us into a trap. We flashed by two dead cows and some butchered hogs, and as yet I had not seen an Indian except the one masked in a bear's pelt. The cabin roof was burned through at the front end. The door was partly open and uninjured.

It was simple reasoning to reconstruct the trag-

edy even while we hastened to shelter. The family had offered resistance, but had been thrown into a panic at the first danger from fire. Then it was quickly over. Doubtless there had been something of a parley with the usual promise of life if they came out. The fire crackled overhead, the victims opened the door.

Cousin said they had been conducted to the main trace before being slaughtered. As I leaped from my horse a fringe of savages broke from cover and began shooting. Cousin dropped the foremost of them. I led the horse inside the cabin and my companion closed and barred the door.

The interior of the place mutely related the tragic story. It is the homely background of a crime that accents the terrible. On the table was the breakfast of the family, scarcely touched. They had been surprised when just about to eat. An overturned stool told how one of the men had leaped to bar the door at the first alarm. I spied through a peephole but could see nothing of our foes. A low cry from Cousin alarmed me. He was overcome at the sight of a small apron.

"I wish I'd stuck to the open," he whispered. "The air o' this place chokes me."

"If we can stand them off till night we can send the horse galloping toward the woods to draw their fire. Then we can run for it."

"There won't be no darkness to-night," morosely

replied Cousin. "They'll make big fires. They'll try to burn us out. We're well forted till they git the roof blazin' ag'in. We'll 'low to stick here s'long we can. They won't dare to hang round too long."

He took a big kettle from the fireplace and thrust it through the hole in the roof. Bullets whistled overhead, with an occasional *whang* as a piece of lead hit the kettle and ricochetted. After the first volley the Indians refused to waste their ammunition, either realizing it was useless, or suspecting the kettle was some kind of a trick.

"I 'lowed they'd git tired," muttered Cousin, sticking the top of his head into the kettle and lifting the edge a crack so he could scrutinize the forest. After a minute of silence his muffed voice called down to me: "Had a notion that cow we passed nearest the woods was dead. Try a shot that'll just graze the rump."

I fired and a Shawnee began rolling toward the bushes. The iron kettle rattled to the ground, and young Cousin, with head and shoulders thrust through the roof, discharged both barrels of his rifle. The Indian stopped rolling. I was amazed that Black Hoof's men had not instantly fired a volley. I exclaimed as much as he dropped to the floor.

"Here she comes!" he cried as the lead began plunging into the thick logs. "If they keep it up

we can dig quite a lot o' lead out the timbers. It took 'em by surprise to see me comin' through the roof, an' it surprised 'em more to see two shoots comin' out of a gun that hadn't been reloaded. Mighty few double barrels out here. Huh! I 'low somethin' cur'ous is goin' to happen."

I could discern nothing to warrant this prophecy. No Indians were to be seen. Cousin called my attention to the sound of their tomahawks. I had heard it before he spoke, but I had been so intent in using my eyes that I had forgotten to interpret what my ears were trying to tell me. There was nothing to do but wait.

Cousin discovered the horse had drunk what water there had happened to be in the bucket, leaving us scarcely a drop. Half an hour of waiting seemed half a day; then something began emerging from the woods. It resolved itself into a barrier of green boughs, measuring some fifteen feet in length and ten feet in height.

Its approach was slow. The noise of the axes was explained. The Indians had chopped saplings and had made a frame and filled it with boughs. Behind it was a number of warriors. About halfway across the clearing were half a dozen long logs scattered about.

"They're thinkin' to make them logs an' while hid by their boughs yank 'em together to make a breastwork. Then they'll pepper us while 'nother party rushes in close. New party will pelt us while

the first makes a run to git ag'in' the walls where we can't damage 'em from the loopholes. That Black Hoof is a devil for thinkin' up tricks."

I fired at the green mass. Cousin rebuked me, saying:

"Don't waste lead. There's three braves with long poles to keep the contraption from fallin' backward. They're on their feet, but keepin' low as possible. There's t'others pushin' the bottom along. There's t'others huggin' the ground. You'll notice the ends an' middle o' the top stick up right pert, but between the middle an' each end the boughs sort o' sag down. If the middle pole can be put out o' business I 'low the weight of it will make it cave in. Loaded? Then don't shoot less you see somethin'."

With this warning he fired at the middle of the screen, and the middle support developed a weakness, indicating he had wounded the poleman. He fired again, and the whole affair began to collapse, and a dozen warriors were uncovered. These raced for the woods, two of them dragging a wounded or dead man.

For a few seconds I was incapable of moving a muscle. I was much like a boy trying to shoot his first buck. Or perhaps it was the very abundance of targets that made me behave so foolishly. Cousin screamed in rage. My bonds snapped, and I fired. If I scored a hit it was only to wound, for none of the fleeing foe lessened their speed.

"Awful poor fiddlin'!" groaned Cousin, eying me malevolently.

"I don't know what was the matter with me. Something seemed to hold me paralyzed. Couldn't move a finger until you yelled."

"Better luck next time," he growled, his resentment passing away.

He loaded and stood his rifle against the logs and began spying from the rear of the cabin. Whenever he glanced at the apron his eyes would close for a moment. No women had lived there. One of the Grisdols, the father of the two children, had brought it as a reminder of his dead wife. Cousin's great fight was not against the red besiegers, but against his emotions. I knew he was thinking of his sister.

"Come here!" I sharply called. "They want a pow-wow. One's waving a green bough."

Cousin climbed to the hole in the roof, holding his rifle out of sight by the muzzle. He yelled in Shawnee for the man to advance alone. The warrior strode forward, the token of peace held high. So far as I could see he did not have even a knife in his belt. Overhead Cousin's rifle cracked and the Indian went down with never a kick.

"Good God! You've fired on a flag of truce, after agreeing to receive it!" I raged.

He stood beside me, a crooked smile on his set face, his eyes gleaming with triumph, his shapely head tilted to enjoy every note of the horrible anger now welling from the forest. "You fired——"

"I 'low I did," he chuckled. Then with awful intentness, "But the folks who lived here an' was happy didn't fire on the Injun fetchin' 'em a bundle o' peace-talk. They believed the Injuns meant it. Do you reckon I treated that dog any worse than the Shawnees treated my father and mother and little sister ten years ago? If you don't 'low that, just keep shet. When a Injun sends you a flag o' truce you want to tie your scalp down, or it'll blow off."

The chorus of howls in the forest suddenly ceased, then were succeeded by sharp yelps of joy. Cousin stared at me in bewilderment. Darting to the back of the cabin, he peered through a chink. "Come here," he softly commanded. I joined him and took his place at the peephole. There was a haze of smoke in the eastern sky.

"That's why Black Hoof an' his men are hangin' round here," he sighed. "He sent a small band farther east. They've made a kill. That's a burnin' over there."

"That would be Edgely's cabin," I decided. "But they moved back to Dunlap's Creek three months ago."

"Thank God for that!" he exclaimed. "But we'll have more Injuns round us mighty soon. I wish it was dark."

"They've stopped their yowling. Look out for fresh deviltry!"

He nodded and walked to the front of the cabin.

The horse neighed shrilly. The call was repeated in the forest. The Indians continued silent. I heard it first; that is to recognize it. For I had heard it the day before. The voice of a man shouting fretfully, much as an angry child complains. Cousin understood it when a whimpering note was added.

"Baby Kirst!" he softly cried. "Black Hoof will 'low his medicine is mighty weak. Baby's out there an' in a bad frame o' mind. Somethin' is goin' ag'in' the grain. It's good medicine for us that he wandered up this way."

I began sketching the happenings at Howard's Creek, but before I could finish the bushes on the hem of the woods were violently agitated and Baby Kirst rode into the clearing, his horse in a lather. When he beheld the dead cows and hogs he yelled like a madman and plucked his heavy ax from his belt, and turned back to the woods. He disappeared with a crash, his hoarse voice shouting unintelligible things.

"Now you can go," quietly said Cousin as he unbarred the door. "Be keerful o' the Injuns to the east. They'll be a small band. I 'low I'll foller Kirst. If he don't drive 'em too fast there oughter be good huntin' for me."

That night I rode into the Greenwood clearing on Dunlap's Creek without having seen any Indians along the way.

CHAPTER IV

I REPORT TO MY SUPERIORS

A NIGHT at the Greenwood cabin and I resumed my journey to Salem on the Roanoke. Near this hamlet lived Colonel Andrew Lewis, to whom I was to report before carrying or forwarding Doctor Connolly's despatches to Governor Dunmore. The trip was free from any incidents and seemed exceedingly tame after the stress of over-mountain travel. All the settlers I talked with were very anxious to know the true conditions along the border.

As I pressed on and found the cabins more thickly strewn along the various waters I was impressed by the belief of many that the Cherokees would join the Ohio tribes before the war ended. One would expect to find this apprehension to be the keenest where the danger would be the greatest. But not so. Whenever I related how Isaac Crabtree had murdered Cherokee Billy, brother of the powerful Oconostota, the pessimists were positive that the Cherokee nation would lay down a red path.

Notwithstanding these natural fears the war remained popular with practically all the men with whom I talked. Various companies were being formed, and militia captains, to make sure of seeing active service, were not punctilious as to where and by what means they secured their men. There was much ill-natured bickering over this rivalry, with several matters assuming such proportions that only Colonel Lewis could straighten them out.

The war was popular because the people realized a farther western expansion would be impossible until the Indians had been crowded back and firmly held behind the Ohio. Anything short of a permanent elimination of the red menace was cried down.

Much resentment was felt against the hotheads in Pennsylvania for openly accusing the Virginians of inciting the war to establish their land claims. It was widely known that the Pennsylvania *Gazette* had published charges against Doctor Connolly to the effect that his agents, acting under his orders, had fired on friendly Shawnees who were escorting white traders into Fort Pitt. Among these settlers east of the mountains the common complaint was about the scarcity of powder and lead.

When within a few miles of my destination I came upon a group of settlers who were gathered about a travel-stained stranger. For the first time since leaving Dunlap's Creek I found myself of

second importance. This man was tanned by the weather to a deep copper color and wore a black cloth around his head in place of a cap.

I halted on the edge of the group and waited for him to finish his narrative which must have been of lively interest if the rapt attention of the men and women was any gage.

"—and using the ax I jumped over his body, got to the horse and rode away," his deep voice concluded. He spoke with a palpable effort and almost with a sing-song intonation.

I dismounted and pressed forward, and told him:

"You talk like an Indian."

"God's marcy, young sir!" cried an old dame. "An', please sweet grace, why shouldn't he? Isn't he Johnny Ward, took by the Injums when a boy, an' just managed to scoot free of 'em?"

The man slowly looked me over, his face as immovable as any Shawnee chief's. Then with the slightest of hesitation between each two words he calmly informed me:

"Escaped as the white woman says. Named John Ward. Indian name, Red Arrow. Now I am back with my people. Now I am John Ward again. I talk bad. I talked with Indians most the time all these years. With my old friends I will grow to talk better."

I congratulated him on his return to civilization. Many a man holding a high place in the colony's

government and in the affection of the people had been held in captivity; but few were the men who returned after spending so many years with the Indians. In that respect Ward's case was unusual.

"Your talk sounds all right to us," said one of the men. "Mayhap you l'arned some things about the red hellions that'll help our boys to give 'em pepper."

"I can lead you to their towns by the shortest trails. I can lead you to their new towns that white men can not find quick," he replied, after a few moments' pause, just as an Indian would wait before answering a question.

Young Cousin flashed into my mind, and I asked:

"Do you know of a white woman—she would be nineteen years old now—named Cousin? She was captured by Shawnees at Keeney's Knob ten years ago."

For half a minute I was doubtful if he understood my query. Then he shook his head. I was disappointed as it seemed to be an excellent chance to learn whether the girl be dead or alive. Still talking in his peculiar, halting way, he said:

"She, the white woman, was killed, probably. If not that she would be taken to Detroit and sold. Now married and living on a Canada farm, probably. Whites taken prisoners were not let to see each other. No whites were ever kept in the village where I lived."

"What village were you kept in?"

"First in Lower Shawnee Town. Then in more towns. As I grew old they took me to the towns farthest from the Ohio. Then came a time when I went where I pleased, but they never took me on their war-paths south the Ohio."

By this time the country folk began to remember that I, too, was a newcomer, and should have much information or gossip. They turned from Ward and plied me with questions. I briefly recited for the twentieth time since leaving Dunlap's Creek the conditions west of the mountains.

Detailed cross-examination brought forth the happenings at Howard's Creek and the murder of the four Grisdols, and the firing of the Edgely cabin. When I said that Black Hoof was in command of the Grisdol raiders my audience displayed nervousness, and more than one glance was cast toward the west. The effect on Ward was pronounced, also. Rising, he asked:

"Catahecassa led that path? I must be going. It was from his band I escaped. His warriors followed me. I will go to the east before camping for the night."

"He'll never dare come east of the mountains!" loudly declared one of the men.

Ward's face was inscrutable as he walked to his horse. As he vaulted into the saddle he remarked:

"Black Hoof has a long arm."

So it happened that John Ward, the returned captive, and I finished the distance to Salem. Temptation assailed me as we reached the edge of the settlement. I had planned all the time to finish my business with Colonel Lewis at his home at Richfield. I had planned this even after learning from Mrs. Davis of the Dales' presence in Salem.

Now, of a sudden, it seemed that I must hunt them up and look on Patricia once more. But Colonel Lewis was waiting for me. I had endured three years without a glimpse of the girl; and leaving Ward to ride on and relate his experience to the Salem people I skirted the town and pressed on to Richfield.

Arriving at the Lewis home I was informed by a colored man that the colonel was not at the house, but somewhere about the grounds.

"An' please goodness, massa, I's gwine to fotch him in two shakes of a houn' dawg's tail," he told me.

I threw myself on the grass and waited. Either the servant's powers of "fotching" had been exaggerated, or else the colonel was quite indifferent to my arrival. Nearly an hour passed before my meditations were interrupted.

This was not my first visit to Richfield to report to the colonel, but I felt no better acquainted at the last meeting than at the first. There was a certain

reserve in his manner which held folks at arm's length. This impression of aloofness was increased by his personal appearance. His tall figure and stern dark eyes made for austerity.

In military affairs he was said to be overstrict in discipline; this from those who had served under him in former wars. Yet he stood very high in the esteem of the county militia and his superiors. Perhaps his severe mien was the natural result of a life filled with stormy experiences. From early manhood he had been employed in fighting Indians.

He was a captain of militia at the age of twenty-two. Twelve years later he was a major, serving under Colonel George Washington. He was seriously wounded at Fort Necessity. He would have played a prominent part in Braddock's first and last Indian battle had he not been detailed to complete a chain of frontier forts. He was in the disastrous Sandy Creek expedition the year following Braddock's defeat.

In 1758 he was an officer under Forbes, and was one of those captured with Grant's detachment. He escaped the stake only to be held a prisoner in Montreal. Later he led a force against the Cherokees; and in Pontiac's War he commanded two hundred and fifty riflemen under Colonel Bouquet. Now he was picked to command one of the two armies that Governor Dunmore proposed to send against the Indian towns above the Ohio.

Among the Indians the name of Lewis stood very high. The natives knew the colonel to be the son of that John Lewis who was long famed as an Indian fighter. It was commonly believed by red and white, and I have no reason to doubt the truth of it, that it was John Lewis who introduced red clover to America.

Whether he did or did not, the Ohio Indians credited him with planting the first seed and said the color resulted from the blood of the red men he had slain. William and Charles Lewis, the colonel's brothers, also were noted border men. Charles undoubtedly ranked as high for courage and astuteness as any frontiersman in Virginia.

The colored man at last turned the corner of the house. Behind him, and not yet in sight, was the colonel, and he was not alone for I could hear his grave voice addressing some companion.

"De c'unel dat stubbo'n I jes' have to talk mighty plain 'fore I could make him pudge erlong," proudly whispered the servant as he passed me.

I sprang to my feet, and Colonel Lewis and His Excellency, John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, our royal governor, leisurely strolled into view.

Colonel Lewis wore no wig and was smoking a pipe, of which he was inordinately fond. It was characteristic of him to be more democratic and careless in personal presentment when with his superiors than when meeting the rough and ready people of the border.

Nor was Governor Dunmore given to set forms. He was forty-two years of age and in his prime, a man among men. He could be most democratic, and on this day there was none of the town beau's fastidiousness in his dress. Yet his wig and his coat were a mode in themselves, while his shoe, knee and stock buckles were of gold. Ultra-genteel young bucks would have had such buckles set with brilliants, that they might twinkle and glitter at every mincing step.

His Excellency walked with a man's stride and gave the impression of being careless in dress, whereas, in fact, he always was perfect in his points. He dominated his attire and left you scarcely conscious of it. The two of them had been discussing something with great earnestness for as they drew near me the colonel gestured with his pipe-stem, and His Excellency pushed back his wig and appeared inclined to disagree.

"Lord, man! I tell you it's their cursed provincial jealousy. They malign the man."

"Your Excellency, I am not the judge," Colonel Lewis calmly replied. "I simply repeat what I hear, and suggest how it may be disastrous to the campaign."

"Jealousy and slander!" heatedly declared the governor. Then his lively gaze rested on me. He frowned, as if trying to remember, then smiled with that graciousness he could so charmingly display when he deemed it worth while and said:

"I've been keeping you from your guest, Colonel. He looks brown and lean enough to have traveled far and to have brought a pretty earful. I know the face and ought to be calling him by name."

Colonel Lewis advanced a few steps and bowed slightly, and refreshed the governor's recollection by saying:

"He is Basdel Morris, Your Excellency. Of Prince William County originally. Before Your Excellency came to Virginia he came out here to act as scout and messenger between us and Fort Pitt."

"Fort Dunmore," coldly corrected the governor, giving the name bestowed in honor of his earldom. Then with a genial smile:

"I remember Mr. Morris distinctly. He has brought papers to me. I vow but he should have a good budget of news. If we could retire to the shade and escape this cursed heat——"

"Inside, inside," bruskly interrupted the colonel, and he waved us through the door with his pipe-stem. "We'll find it cool in there."

And we did; and very pleasant too, and with many little comforts for those who wish to be indolent, such as foot-rests, and low tables for holding decanter and glasses and a sheaf of long pipes and some of Virginia's superb tobacco.

"No ceremony here, Mr. Morris. Sit down, man. We will play His Lordship is traveling in disguise."

"Forsooth! He has that which we are hungry to receive! It's more fit we should stand while he

takes his ease," gaily exclaimed His Excellency. And he removed his wig and mopped his cropped poll and sipped appreciatively of the tall glass a soft-footed servant placed at his elbow.

This was a most pleasing trait about His Excellency, and one which in happier times should have endeared him even to people who have small use for earls. He could make the young or diffident man feel more at home than could the democratic and autocracy-hating Andrew Lewis. Nor was it any affectation; for we were soon to learn he could keep up with hardy borderers on long forest marches, and at that, proceed afoot and carry his own blanket and equipment like any backwoods volunteer.

Colonel Lewis shot a glance at me and then at the governor, and I verily believed his dark eyes were laughing at one of us. Surely not at me, for I was too insignificant. I obtained an inkling as to the cause of his cynical amusement when he said:

"Young Mr. Morris, while not forest-bred, has lived long enough in the woods as to make him blunt of tongue. Would Your Excellency prefer that he make a verbal report to me and that I reduce it to writing for your consideration?"

"After what the Quakers have said I find my skin to be very thick except when it comes to something touching my personal honor," coldly replied the governor. "Let the man tell what he will. We want the truth."

Until this moment I had barely opened my mouth.

Now I produced the despatches committed to my care by Doctor Connolly. In presenting these to Governor Dunmore I remained standing, waiting to be dismissed.

His Excellency, however, made no move to open and read his despatches, but fell to staring at me speculatively. Finally he said:

"Let's have the personal side—the things you observed on your journey back here." And he motioned for me to be seated.

I told them of Bald Eagle's murder, and His Excellency exhibited hot anger, and broke in on my recital long enough to exclaim:

"Curse their black hearts! I drove John Ryan out of the country for murdering on the Cheat, Ohio, and the Monongahela. I've had others arrested, and their crazy neighbors have released them. I offer rewards for still others, and they come and go unmolested!"

"Yes, it's unfortunate that some of our border men are as murderous as the Indians," quietly agreed Colonel Lewis. His Excellency subsided and nodded for me to continue.

I next spoke of young Shelby Cousin, and the colonel's eyes grew hard as I related the youth's lament over his little sister, and, in his behalf, urged that some effort be made to ascertain the girl's fate. The governor wrinkled his nose and brows in an effort to remember something. Then he said:

"I knew the name was familiar. I've sent word to Connolly to seek traces of the girl through the different traders. The war has closed that line of inquiry, I fear, as the traders have come in, or have been slaughtered. Very sad case. Very sad. The young man should go to England to begin life anew and learn to forget. I shall arrange it for him."

"He would die before he would quit the woods, Your Excellency," said the colonel. "If he did consent and did go to England he would die of home-sickness inside of ten days. Either that, or he would try to swim back."

"Rather a poor opinion of England's charms," remarked the governor.

When I took up the general scarcity of powder and lead and described how handicapped the settlers were by the lack of these vital necessities, it was Colonel Lewis's turn to show the most feeling.

His anger was almost passionate, and none the less impressive because he held it in check. Staring wide-eyed at the governor he concluded his outburst by demanding:

"What about it, Your Excellency?"

"What about it? Why, that's something to ask of the House of Burgesses, wound all up in their red tape. His gracious Majesty suggested in 'sixty-three that insomuch as the colonies implored England's aid against the French and Indians they should contribute something toward the cost of their

defense in that war. Methinks they have taken the suggestion as an affront."

"The French War is ten years old. It was fought so that England might gain Canada. Virginia is still a royal province and her people need powder and lead," the colonel replied. Perhaps he stressed "still" a bit. At least the governor's gaze dropped and concealed any impression he might have received.

The governor drummed his fingers on the low liquor-stand, then lifted his head and stated:

"This war will never be won by isolated groups of settlers fighting on the defensive along the many creeks and rivers. The decisive blow will be struck by the two armies soon to take the field. There will be plenty of powder for the men I lead and the men you are to lead. As to the back-country settlements, the House of Burgesses should have provided for them. His Majesty is eager to aid all his subjects, but there's scant policy in serving our powder and balls to be husbanded along the western slope of the Alleghanies and perhaps later used against England's soldiers."

Colonel Lewis dropped his pipe and stared wrathfully at his noble guest. With an effort he restrained his temper and rejoined:

"The talk seems to touch upon some war other than that with the Ohio tribes."

His Excellency at once was all smiles and gra-

ciousness. Leaning forward and placing a hand on the colonel's knee, he earnestly declared:

"The conversation has wandered, foolishly on my part, I admit. I have lacked in tact, but the first fault I swear is due to the attitude of the Burgesses in neglecting to take proper measures for defending the frontier. Before England can send sufficient supplies to Virginia this war will have ended. There is plenty of powder at Williamsburg. Why doesn't the House of Burgesses send it to the border?"

"There is but a small store at the most, Your Excellency."

"But why retain it when it is needed elsewhere?"

"That is hardly a question I can answer," was the stiff reply. Then with a flash of heat:

"It's a shame! We repeatedly urge those families to stick, not to come off their creeks until they've laid by their corn and harvested their oats; and they are denied the simple means of defending their lives. Whether the Burgesses or the royal governor be at fault the fact remains that the settlers pay in blood and anguish."

"If there is any powder at Williamsburg or Norfolk that I can lay hands to, it shall go over the mountains. At least the royal governor will prove his hands are clean," solemnly declared His Excellency.

"I'll warrant that Pennsylvania has traded

enough guns and powder to the Shawnee and Mingos," moodily observed the colonel.

"There's too much talk in Williamsburg over peoples' rights, and not enough concern for peoples' lives," declared His Excellency. "It would be a good thing if the House of Burgesses could be locked up in a fort and made to repel an Indian attack."

"Well, well," sighed the colonel, "we'll never lick the Ohio tribes with proclamations and empty hands."

"By gad, sir! We'll whip them with powder and lead! I've set myself to the task of crushing the Indian power. It shall be done!"

They settled back and signaled for me to resume my narrative. When I mentioned Crabtree and the other killers both the governor and the colonel expressed a wish that the Indians might catch them, or else scare them from the border. I closed my story by speaking of John Ward, the returned captive. The military instinct of both my hearers was instantly aroused; for here was a source of inside information our spies could not hope to provide.

"Find that man and send him here," ordered the governor. "But before you go tell us something of conditions about Fort Dunmore. You seem to have skipped that."

This was what I had expected, and I did not relish the task. Had I been talking alone with Col-

onel Lewis it would have been the first topic I had touched upon.

"Your Excellency has Doctor Connolly's despatches. Doubtless they will give you much more than I can," I faltered.

"There isn't any danger of your duplicating Doctor Connolly's information," said His Excellency sharply.

"His Excellency desires to learn those odds and ends which wouldn't be included in an official report, but which may throw some light on the whole situation," added the colonel, his gaze resting on me very insistently. And somehow I knew he wanted me to talk, and to speak plainly.

If I reported according to my sense of duty I feared I was in for an unpleasant experience with His Excellency. If I would ever receive any favors from him it would be because I kept my mouth shut and steered clear of dangerous ground. The situation at Pitt, however, had offended me; and now that I must speak I grew reckless and decided to speak frankly.

"Arthur St. Clair, representing the Pennsylvania proprietors, together with other eminent men in that colony, publicly declared that Your Excellency is in partnership with Doctor Connolly in various land-deals," I began.

"Doctor Connolly has acted as my agent, just as his uncle, Michael Croghan, has acted for Colonel

George Washington," easily remarked His Excellency.

"Croghan repudiates the acts of Connolly," I said.

Dunmore frowned and spoke wide of the mark when he said:

"What St. Clair and his friends see fit to believe scarcely constitutes facts. But go on."

"They also say that this war with the Shawnees is being hurried on for the purpose of establishing our boundary-claims and making good our titles to grants under Virginia patents."

"Scarcely news. They've been howling that ever since last April," growled Lewis.

"I've been absent some months. I have no way of knowing what you've heard, or haven't heard. I'm afraid I have nothing new in the way of facts or gossip," I said, and my face flushed.

Governor Dunmore laughed softly and good-naturedly nodded for me to continue. I said:

"It is commonly believed in Pennsylvania that Connolly's circular letter to our frontier was meant to precipitate a war so that he might cover up the costs of rebuilding Fort Pitt. It is said on all sides that the commandant fears the House of Burgesses will repudiate his expenditures even after Your Excellency has endorsed them—providing there is no war."

The governor's face colored, but his voice was quiet as he said:

"Connolly may be a fool in many things, but he is right about the House of Burgesses. There isn't any doubt as to their repudiating anything which looks like a benefit to our frontier."

"Your Excellency, I can scarcely agree to that," cut in Colonel Lewis. It was the second time their counter-views had struck out sparks.

Both remained silent for half a minute, each, I have no doubt, controlling an impulse to explode. Relations between the colonies and England resembled an open powder-keg. With a bow that might indicate he desired to avoid a dangerous subject the governor shifted the conversation by remarking:

"After all, it doesn't matter what Pennsylvania thinks, so long as we know her interests are hostile to Virginia's. I am governor of Virginia. I will serve her interests, and by gad! if the Quakers don't like our way they can chew their thumbs."

"We are one in that!" heartily cried the colonel.

Governor Dunmore frowned down at his gold shoe-buckles and wearily said:

"They say I want war. But the Williamsburg paper has insisted on this war since last March. Truth is, the border wants the war. And let me confess to you, Colonel Lewis, that the Earl of Dartmouth, as Secretary of State for the colonies, will express His Majesty's great displeasure to me before this war is over.

"England does not want his campaign to go through. Taking the position I have means I will meet with disfavor and criticism at home."

Turning to me, he querulously complained.

"And it's you people along the border who make the war necessary. It's the horrible massacres of harmless Indians that brought the trouble upon me."

This was grossly untrue and I countered:

"Even Logan doesn't claim that. It's been give and take as to the killings, with the Indians getting the better of it in scalps. A general war can result only from the Indians' belief that our settlers are crossing the mountains to settle in the Kentucky country."

"Ah! There you go! True to the dot, too!" he cried. "You Americans are restless. You acquire no attachment to any place. Wandering about seems to be engrafted in your natures. It's your great weakness that you should forever be thinking the lands farther off are better than those on which you're already settled."

"But land-grants on the Ohio are worthless without settlers," I meekly reminded. Colonel Lewis indulged in a frosty smile. His Excellency eyed me shrewdly, and said:

"Of course the lands must be settled sometime. The trouble comes from the frontier people's failure to understand that His Majesty's government has any right to forbid backwoodsmen from taking

over any Indian lands which happen to hit the fancy.

"They have no idea of the permanent obligation of treaties which His Majesty's government has made with the various Indian nations. Why, some of the frontier people feel so isolated from the colonies that they wish to set up democratic governments of their own. A pretty kettle of fish! Then such creatures as this Crabtree murder such men as the brother of the powerful Cherokee chief. More trouble for the border.

"I shall offer a reward of a hundred pounds for Crabtree's arrest. If he is arrested the border men will release him. And yet they demand that His Majesty supply them with powder to defend their homes. Good God! What inconsistency! And as if we did not have enough trouble inside our colony there is Mr. Penn, to the north. As proprietary governor he sullies the dignity of his communications to the House of Representatives by making the same a conveyance of falsehood, thereby creating trouble between Pennsylvania and Virginia.

"He is even now trying to make my Lord Dartmouth believe that my zeal in carrying on this war is not through any sense of duty to my king, but because of a desire for personal emoluments. If he can make the people of Virginia believe that, then I am helpless."

Certainly this defense of his motives was not meant to convert me. My ideas worried His Excellency none. He was testing Colonel Lewis, whose reserve made the broaching of delicate subjects very much of a difficulty. The colonel quickly declared:

"Your Excellency knows that I thoroughly understand the true bias of Pennsylvania. We are with you in this war heart and soul. But I do think, to put it mildly, that Doctor Connolly has been indiscreet."

He had come back to the one phase of the conversation which interested him. The governor hesitated a moment, then asked me:

"What is your personal opinion of Doctor Connolly? Speak freely."

"I consider him to be a very ambitious, intriguing man, and very much of a fire-eater."

Both the gentlemen smiled, His Excellency being less genuine than the colonel. "To be an ambitious fire-eater is not a bad quality in these times," said the governor. "As to intrigue, so long as it is for Virginia I will not condemn it too strongly. What other charges are there in your arraignment?"

"I do not arraign him," I retorted. Believing I had gone too far ever to retrieve myself in the governor's good graces, and being made angry by the thought, I boldly continued: "Connolly is too autocratic. He carries things with too high a hand. He

takes measures which neither Your Excellency, nor any other of His Majesty's governors would dream of indulging in. He arrests and imprisons citizens without any pretense at legal procedure. It is because of such actions that many in Pennsylvania expressed the wish we might lose the war. I will add that I heard no such expressions of ill-will since the white families were murdered along the Monongahela."

"It does make a difference as to whose ox is being gored," grimly commented Colonel Lewis.

"Does Pennsylvania still blame Michael Cresap for the death of Logan's people?" asked the governor.

"Many of them do, because Connolly reduced him in rank. His reinstatement at Your Excellency's command is not so generally known."

"Confusion and bickering!" wrathfully exclaimed the governor. "Virginia demanding a decisive war—England opposed to it. Our militia captains stealing each other's men—Sir William Johnson's death is most untimely."

Sir William Johnson dead! For the moment I was stunned. My facial expression was so pronounced that His Excellency kindly added:

"The sad news has just reached us. Never was he needed more and wanted more. The colonies have been so used to having him hold the Iroquois in check that few have paused to picture what might

happen if his influence were removed from the Six Nations."

He rose and paced the room for a few turns. Then with a short bow to me he addressed the colonel, saying:

"With your permission, Colonel, I believe I shall retire for an hour. When the man Ward comes I wish to question him."

"By all means, Your Excellency, take a bit of rest. I shall call you if the fellow comes."

I turned to go and the colonel walked with me to the door, urging me to return and remain his guest that night. I thanked him, explaining an acceptance of his kind offer would depend on circumstances. He walked with me to my horse and with a side-glance at the house softly inquired:

"What do the people over the mountains and in Pennsylvania say about the Quebec Bill now before Parliament?"

"I do not remember hearing it mentioned. I do not think any of the settlers are interested in it."

"Not interested!" he groaned. "And if it is approved* by Parliament the American colonies will be robbed of hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory. They will lose the lands which already have been given them in their own charters. Think of Virginia and Pennsylvania quarreling over the

*The Quebec Bill, to take effect in 1775, was approved June 22, 1774, or before Colonel Lewis and Morris had their conversation.

junction of two rivers when we stand fair to lose all the country west of the Alleghanies. Young man, there's going to be war." This was very softly spoken.

"We're in it now," I stupidly replied.

"I am speaking of war with England," he whispered.

I could scarcely accept it as being a true prophecy. I was not disturbed by it. The quarreling between colonies and the mother-country was an old story. Hiding my skepticism I asked, "When will it begin?"

"It began in 1763, when the English Ministry decided to collect revenues from the colonies," was the quiet reply. "It will soon be open war. I verily believe I am entertaining in my humble home to-day the last royal governor of Virginia."

CHAPTER V

LOVE COMES A CROPPER

"I AM speaking of a war with England." These words of Colonel Lewis rang in my ears as I rode to Salem. They had sounded fantastic when he uttered them. Now that I was alone they repeated themselves most ominously. The flying hoofs of my horse pounded them into my ears. War with England was unthinkable, and yet the colonel's speech lifted me up to a dreary height and I was gazing over into a new and very grim world.

For years, from my first connected thoughts, there had been dissension after dissension between England and America. My father before me had lived through similar disputes. But why talk of war now? Many times the colonies had boiled over a bit; then some concession was made, and what our orators had declared to be a crisis died out and became a dead issue.

To be sure another "crisis" always took the place of the defunct one, but the great fact remained that none of those situations had led to war. Perhaps if some one other than Colonel Lewis had

indulged in the dire foreboding it would have made less of an impression. At the time he spoke the words I had not been disturbed. Now that I was remembering what an unemotional level-headed man he was the effect became accumulative. The farther I left Richfield behind and the longer I mulled over his sinister statement the more I worried.

As I neared Salem my meditations continued disquieting and yet were highly pleasing. I was on my way to meet Patricia Dale. I was born on the Mattapony and left an orphan at an early age. I had gone to Williamsburg when turning sixteen, and soon learned to love and wear gold and silver buckles on a pewter income.

In my innocence, rather ignorance, I unwittingly allowed my town acquaintances to believe me to be a chap of means. When I discovered their false estimate I did not have the courage to disillusion them. My true spending-pace was struck on my eighteenth birthday, and inside the year I had wasted my King William County patrimony.

Just what process of reasoning I followed during that foolish year I have never been able to determine. I must have believed it to be imperative that I live up to the expectations of my new friends. As a complement to this idiotic obsession there must have been a grotesque belief that somehow, by accident or miracle, I would be kept in funds indefinitely.

I do recall my amazement at the abrupt ending of my dreams. I woke up one morning to discover I had no money, no assets. There were no odds and ends, even, of wreckage which I could salvage for one more week of the old life.

Among my first friends had been Ericus Dale and his daughter, Patricia. To her intimates she was known as Patsy. As was to be expected when an awkward boy meets a dainty and wonderful maid, I fell in love completely out of sight. At nineteen I observed that the girl, eighteen, was becoming a toast among men much older and very, very much more sophisticated than I.

She was often spoken of as the belle of Charles City County, and I spent much time vainly wishing she was less attractive. Her father, engaged in the Indian-trade, and often away from home for several months at a time, had seemed to be very kindly disposed to me.

I instinctively hurried to the Dales to impart the astounding fact that I was bankrupt. One usually speaks of financial reverses as "crashing about" one's head. My wind-up did not even possess that poor dignity; for there was not enough left even to rattle, let alone crash.

The youth who rode so desperately to the Dale home that wonderful day tragically to proclaim his plight, followed by fervid vows to go away and make a new fortune, has long since won my sym-

pathy. I have always resented Ericus Dale's attitude toward that youth on learning he was a pauper. It is bad enough to confess to a girl that one has not enough to marry on; but it is hell to be compelled to add that one has not enough to woo on.

How it wrung my heart to tell her I was an impostor, that I was going to the back-country and begin life all over. Poor young devil! How many like me have solemnly declared their intentions to begin all over, whereas, in fact, they never had begun at all.

And why does youth in such juvenile cataclysms feel forced to seek new fields in making the fresh start? Shame for having failed, I suppose. An unwillingness to toe the scratch under the handicap of having his neighbors know it is his seconl trial.

But so much had happened since that epochal day back in Williamsburg that it seemed our parting had been fully a million years ago. It made me smile to remember how mature Patsy had been when I meekly ran her errands and gladly wore her yoke in the old days.

Three years of surveying, scouting and despatch-bearing through the trackless wilderness had aged me. I prided myself I was an old man in worldly wisdom. Patsy Dale had only added three years to her young life. I could even feel much at ease in meeting Ericus Dale. And yet there had been no day during my absence that I did not think of

her, still idealizing her, and finding her fragrant memory an anodyne when suffering in the wilderness.

The sun was casting its longest shadows as I inquired for the house and rode to it. If my heart went pit-a-pat when I dismounted and walked to the veranda it must have been because of anticipation. As I was about to rap on the casing of the open door I heard a deep voice exclaim:

"This country's going to the dogs! We need the regulars over here. Using volunteers weakens a country. Volunteers are too damned independent. They'll soon get the notion they're running things over here. Put me in charge of Virginia, and I'd make some changes. I'd begin with Dunmore and wind up with the backwoodsmen. Neither Whigs nor Tories can save this country. It's trade we want, trade with the Indians."

I could not hear that any one was answering him, and after a decent interval I rapped again. At last I heard a slow heavy step approaching from the cool twilight of the living-room.

"Aye? You have business with me, my man?" demanded Dale, staring into my face without appearing to recognize me. He had changed none that I could perceive. Short, square as though chopped out of an oak log. His dark hair still kinked a bit and suggested great virility. His thick lips were pursed as of old, and the bushy brows, projecting

nearly an inch from the deep-set eyes, perhaps had a bit more gray in them than they showed three years back.

"Ericus Dale, you naturally have forgotten me," I began. "I am Basdel Morris. I knew you and your daughter three years ago in Williamsburg."

"Oh, young Morris, eh? I'm better at remembering Indian faces than white. Among 'em so much. So you're young Morris, who made a fool of himself trying to be gentry. Sit down. Turned to forest-running, I should say." And he advanced to the edge of the veranda and seated himself. He had not bothered to shake hands.

"I had business with Colonel Lewis and I wished to see you and Patsy before going back," I explained. I had looked for bluntness in his greeting, but I had expected to be invited inside the house.

"Pat's out," he mumbled, his keen gaze roaming up and down my forest garb. "But she'll be back. Morris, you don't seem to have made much of a hit at prosperity since coming out this way."

"I'm dependent only on myself," I told him. "Personal appearance doesn't go for much when you're in the woods."

"Ain't it the truth?" he agreed. "In trade?"

"Carrying despatches between Fort Pitt and Governor Dunmore just now. Surveying before that."

"Then, by Harry, sir! You could be in better business," he snapped. "What with Dunmore at

the top, and thieving, land-grabbing settlers at the bottom, this country is going to the devil! Dunmore cooks up a war to make a profit out of his land-jobbing! Settlers quit good lands on this side the mountains to go land-stealing in the Kentucky country and north of the Ohio. It riles my blood! I say you could be in better business than helping along the schemes of Dunmore and that trained skunk of his, Jack Connolly."

I smiled pleasantly, beginning to remember that Ericus Dale was always a freely spoken man.

"Do you mean that there is no need of this war? You say it is cooked up."

"Need of war?" he wrathfully repeated. "In God's mercy why should we have war with the Indians? All they ask is to be let alone! Ever see a single piaster of profit made out of a dead Indian unless you could sell his hair? Of course not. The Indians don't want war. What they want is trade. I've lived among 'em. I know. It's Dunmore and the border scum who want war. They want to steal more land."

I had no wish to quarrel with the man, but I, too, had been among the Indians; and I could not in decency to myself allow his ridiculous statements to go unchallenged.

"How can the country expand unless the settlers have land? And if the Indians block the trail how can we get the land without fighting for it? Surely

it was never intended that five or more square miles of the fairest country on earth should be devoted to keeping alive one naked red hunter."

He fairly roared in disgust. Then with an effort to be calm he began:

"Land? Settlers? You can't build a profit on land and settlers. Why, the colonies already refuse to pay any revenue to England. Line both sides of the Ohio with log cabins and stick a white family in each and what good does it do? Did the French try to settle Canada? No! The French weren't fools. They depended on trade."

"But they lost Canada," I reminded.

"Bah! For a purely military reason. The future of this country is trade. England's greatness is built up on trade." His trick of jumping his voice on that word "trade" was very offensive to the ears.

"Pennsylvania has the right idea. Pennsylvania is prosperous. Pennsylvania doesn't go round chopping down bee-trees and then killing the bees to get the honey. What good is this land over here if you can't get fur from it? Settlers chop down the timber, burn it, raise measly patches of corn, live half-starved, die. That's all."

His crazy tirade nettled me. It was obvious I could not keep in his good books, even with Patricia as the incentive, without losing my self-respect. I told him:

"This country can never develop without settled homes. We're building rudely now, but a hundred years from now——"

"Yah!" And his disgust burst through the thick lips in a deep howl. "Who of us will be alive a hundred years from now? Were we put on earth to slave and make fortunes for fools not yet born? Did any fools work and save up so we could take life soft and easy? You make me sick!"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Dale, to hear you say that. However, the war is here——"

"The war may be here, in Virginia, among the backwoodsmen. It is also in Dunmore's heart, but it ain't in the hearts of the Indians," he passionately contradicted. "The Indians only ask to be let alone, to be allowed to trade with us. Some canting hypocrites are whining for us to civilize the Indians. Why should they be civilized? Do they want to be? Ever hear of Indians making a profit out of our civilization? Did the Conestoga Indians make a profit when they tried to live like the whites near Lancaster, and the Paxton boys killed fourteen of them, men, women and children, then broke into the Lancaster jail where the others had been placed for their safety, and butchered the rest of them?

"Did the ancient Virginia Indians prosper by civilization? I reckon if the old Powhatans could return they'd have some mighty warm things to say on that score. Why shouldn't the Indians insist we

live as they do? They were here first. The only way to help the Indian is to trade with him. And when you help him that way you're helping yourself. That's the only point you can ever make a red man see.

"I know the Indians. I can go into their towns now, be they Cherokee, Mingo, Shawnee or Delaware, and they'll welcome me as a brother. They know I don't want their land. They know I'm their true friend. They want me to make a profit when I trade with them, so I'll come again with more rum and blankets and guns, and gay cloth for their women."

"You have the trader's point of view, and very naturally so," I said.

"Thank God I ain't got the land-grabber's point of view! Nor the canting hypocrite's point of view! Nor a thick-headed forest-runner's point of view!" he loudly stormed, rising to end the discussion.

But I was not to be balked, and I reminded him:

"I called to pay my respects to Mistress Dale. I hope I may have the pleasure."

"She's in the field back of the house. I'll call her," he grumbled. "I have a man in my kitchen, a white man, who has lived with the Indians ever since he was a boy. He knows more about them than all you border-folks could learn in a million years. He's the most sensible white man I ever

met. He agrees with me perfectly that trade is what the Indian wants; not settlers nor Bibles."

"Your guest would be John Ward!" I exclaimed, remembering the governor's errand. "I was asked by Colonel Lewis to find him and send him to Richfield. The colonel and Governor Dunmore wish to talk with him."

"Ho! Ho! That's the way the cat jumps, eh? Want to milk him for military information, eh? Well, I reckon I'll go along with him and see they don't play no tricks on him. I've taken a strong liking to Ward. He's the one white man that's got my point of view."

"He lived with the Indians so long he may have the Indians' point of view," I warned.

"The sooner white men learn the Indians' point of view the better it'll be for both white and red. Ward knows the Indians well enough to know I'm their friend. He knows I'm more'n welcome in any of their towns. I'm going to carry a talk to Cornstalk and Black Hoof. If I can't stop this war I can fix it so's there'll never be any doubt who's to blame for it."

"I tell you, Dale, that no white men, except it be Ward or Tavenor Ross and others like them, are safe for a minute with Logan's Cayugas, Cornstalk's Shawnees, Red Hawk's Delawares, or Chiyawee's Wyandots."

"Three years ain't even made a tomahawk im-

provement on you," he sneered. "You mean to tell me that after all my years of friendship with the Indians I won't be safe among them, or that any friends I take along won't be safe among them? You talk worse'n a fool! I can send my girl *alone* into the Scioto villages, and once she gives belts from me she will be as safe as she would be in Williamsburg or Norfolk."

"Such talk is madness," I cried. "The one message your cousin, Patrick Davis' wife, on Howard's Creek, asked me to deliver to your daughter is for her not to cross the mountains until the Indian trouble is over."

"An old biddy whose husband is scared at every Indian he sees because he knows he's squatting on their lands. My cousin may not be safe on Howard's Creek, but my daughter would be. I'll say more; once the Indians know I am at Howard's Creek, they'll spare that settlement."

It was useless to argue with the man. It was almost impossible to believe that he meant his vaporings for seriousness. With a scowl he walked to the rear of the house and entered the kitchen. All the windows were open, and his voice was deep and heavy. I heard him say:

"Ward, I want you. We're going to have a talk with two white men, who don't understand Indians. Pat, that young cub of a forest-running Morris is out front. Hankers to see you, I 'low."

My leather face was still on fire when I heard the soft swish of skirts. Then she stood before me, more beautiful than even my forest-dreaming had pictured her, more desirable than ever. She courtesied low, and the amazing mass of blue-black hair seemed an over-heavy burden for the slim white neck to carry.

She smiled on me and I found my years dropping away like the leaves of the maple after its first mad dance to the tune of the autumn's wind. I felt fully as young as when I saw her in Williamsburg. And time had placed a distance other than that of years between us: it had destroyed the old familiarity.

To my astonishment we were meeting as casual acquaintances, much as if a chin-high barrier was between us. It was nothing like that I had pictured. I had supposed we would pick up the cordiality at the first exchange of glances. I stuck out my hand and she placed her hand in it for a moment.

"Basdel, I would scarcely have known you. Taller and thinner. And you're very dark."

"Wind and weather," I replied. "It was at Howard's Creek I learned you were here. I was very anxious to see you."

"Don't stand." And she seated herself and I took a chair opposite her. "So nice of you to have us in mind. It's some three years since."

"I reckon your father doesn't fancy me much."

"He's displeased with you about something," she

readily agreed. "You mustn't mind what he says. He's excitable."

"If I minded it I've forgotten it now," I told her. I now had time to note the cool creamy whiteness of her arms and throat and to be properly amazed. She had been as sweet and fresh three years before, but I was used to town maids then, and accepted their charms as I did the sunshine and spring flowers. But for three years I had seen only frontier women, and weather and worry and hard work had made sad work of delicate complexions.

"Now tell me about yourself," she commanded.

There was not much to tell; surveying, scouting, despatch-bearing. When I finished my brief recital she made a funny little grimace, too whimsical to disturb me, and we both laughed. Then quite seriously she reminded me:

"But, Basdel, your last words were that you were to make a man of yourself."

In this one sentence she tagged my forest work as being valueless. Had I been the boy who rode through the May sunshine frantically to announce his poverty, I might have accepted her verdict as a just sentence. Now there was a calculating light in her dark blue eyes that put me on my mettle. She was throwing down a red ax.

"I am self-dependent," I said. "I never was that in Williamsburg. I have risked much. Before crossing the mountains, I did not dare risk even

your displeasure. I have done things that men on the frontier think well of. When you knew me back East I only succeeded in making a fool of myself. The carrying of despatches between Fort Pitt and Botetourt County is considered to be rather important."

"But, please mercy, there's more important things for young men to do than these you've mentioned," she softly rebuked.

"If the work of surveying lands for homes and settlements, if the scouting of wild country to protect settlements already established, if keeping a line of communication open between the Ohio and the James are not important tasks, then tell me what are?" I demanded.

She was displeased at my show of heat.

"There's no call for your defending to me your work over the mountains," she coldly reminded. "As an old friend I was interested in you."

"But tell me what you would consider to have been more important work," I persisted. "I honestly believed I was working into your good opinion. I believed that once you knew how seriously I was taking life, you would be glad of me."

"Poor Basdel," she soothed. "I mustn't scold you."

"Pitying me is worse," I corrected. "If you can't understand a man doing a man's work at least with-

hold your sympathy. I am proud of the work I have done."

This ended her softer mood.

"You do right to think well of your work," she sweetly agreed. "But there are men who also take pride in being leaders of affairs, of holding office and the like."

"And going into trade," I was rash enough to suggest.

With a stare that strongly reminded me of her father she slowly said:

"In trade? Why not? Trade is most honorable. The world is built up on trade. Men in trade usually have means. They have comfortable homes. They can give advantages to those dependent upon them. Trade? Why, the average woman would prefer a trader to the wanderer, who owns only his rifle and what game he shoots."

"Patsy, that is downright savagery," I warmly accused. "Come, be your old self. We used to be mighty good friends three years ago. Be honest with me. Didn't you like me back in Williamsburg?"

The pink of her cheeks deepened, but she quietly countered:

"Why, Basdel, I like you now. If I didn't I never would bother to speak plainly to you."

Three years' picture-painting was turning out to be dream-stuff. I tried to tell myself I was foolish

to love one so much like Ericus Dale; but the lure was there and I could no more resist it than a bear can keep away from a honey-tree.

She had shown herself to be contemptuous in reviewing the little I had done. She was blind to the glory of to-morrow and more than filled with absurd crotchets, and yet there was but one woman in America who could make my heart run away from control. If it couldn't be Patsy Dale it could be no one.

"Back in Williamsburg, before I made such a mess of my affairs, you knew I loved you."

"We were children—almost."

"But I've felt the same about you these three years. I've looked ahead to seeing you. I've—well, Patsy, you can guess how I feel. Do I carry any hope with me when I go back to the forest?"

The color faded from her face and her eyes were almost wistful as she met my gaze unflinchingly, and gently asked:

"Basdel, is it fair for a man going back to the forest to carry hope with him? The man goes once and is gone three years. What if he goes a second time and is gone another three years? And then what if he comes back, rifle in hand, and that's all? What has he to offer her? A home in the wilderness? But what if she has always lived in town and isn't used to that sort of life?"

"But if she loves the man——"

"But what if she believes she doesn't love him quite enough to take him and his rifle and live in the woods? Has he any more right to expect that sacrifice than she has the right to expect him to leave the forest and rifle and make his home where she always has lived?"

"I suppose not. But I, too, like the scenes and things you like. I don't intend spending all my life fighting Indians and living in the forest."

"If your absence meant something definite," she sighed.

"Meaning if I were in trade," I bitterly said.

The kindly mood was gone. She defiantly exclaimed:

"And why not? Trade is honorable. It gets one somewhere. It has hardships but it brings rewards. You come to me with your rifle. You talk sentiment. I listen because we were fond of each other in a boy-and-girl way. We mustn't talk this way any more. You always have my best wishes, but I never would make a frontier woman. I like the softer side of life too much."

"Then you will not wait? Will not give me any hope?"

"Wait for what? Another three years; and you coming back with your long rifle and horse. Is that fair to ask any woman?"

"No. Not when the woman questions the fairness. 'Another three years' are your words, not

mine. I shall see this war through, and then turn selfish. What I have done is good for me. It will serve to build on."

"I'm sure of it," she agreed. "And you always have my best—my best wishes."

"And down in your heart you dare care some, or you wouldn't talk it over with me," I insisted.

"We liked each other as boy and girl. Perhaps our talk is what I believe I owe to that friendship. Now tell me something about our backwoods settlements."

In story-writing the lover should, or usually does, fling himself off the scene when his attempt at love-making is thwarted. Not so in life with Patsy. I believed she cared for me, or would care for me if I could only measure up to the standard provided for her by her father's influence.

So instead of running away I remained and tried to give her a truthful picture of border conditions. She understood my words but she could not visualize what the cabins stood for. They were so many humble habitations, undesirable for the town-bred to dwell in, rather than the symbols of many, happy American homes. She pretended to see when she was blind, but her nods and bright glances deceived me none. She had no inkling of what a frontier woman must contend with every day, and could she have glimpsed the stern life, even in spots, it would be to draw back in disgust at the hardships involved.

So I omitted all descriptions of how the newly married were provided with homes by a few hours' work on the part of the neighbors, how the simple furniture was quickly fashioned from slabs and sections of logs, how a few pewter dishes and the husband's rifle constituted the happy couple's worldly possessions. She wished to be nice to me, I could see. She wished to send me away with amiable thoughts.

"It sounds very interesting," she said. "Father must take me over the mountains before we return to town."

"Do not ask him to do that," I cried. And I repeated the message sent by Mrs. Davis.

She was the one person who always had her own way with Ericus Dale. She smiled tolerantly and scoffed:

"Father's cousin sees danger where there isn't any. No Indian would ever bother me once he know I was my father's daughter."

"Patsy Dale," I declared in my desperation. "I've loved you from the day I first saw you. I love you now. It's all over between us because you have ended it. But do not for your own sake cross the mountains until the Indian danger is ended. Howard's Creek is the last place you should visit. Why, even this side of the creek I had to fight for my life. The Indians had murdered a family of four, two of them children."

She gave a little shudder but would not surrender her confidence in her father.

"One would think I intended going alone. I know the Indians are killing white folks, and are being killed by white folks. But with my father beside me——"

"If you love your father keep him on this side of the Alleghanies!"

"You will make me angry, Basdel. I don't want to be displeased with you. My father has known the Indians for years. He has warm friends in every tribe. He is as safe among them as he is here in Salem. And if Howard's Creek is in danger he can request the Indians to keep away from it."

"Good God! Are you as blind as all that?" I groaned.

"Forest-running, Basdel, has made you violent and rough in your talk," she icily rebuked. "You hate the Indians simply because you do not understand them. Now I'm positive that the best thing for you to do is to keep away from the frontier and see if you can't start right on this side of the mountains."

It would be folly to argue with her longer. I fished a pair of moccasins, absurdly small, from the breast of my hunting-shirt and placed them on the table. I had bought them from a squaw in White Eyes' village, and they were lavishly embroidered with gay beads. The squaw had laughed when I told the size I wanted.

"If you will forget these came from the forest and will let me leave them, I shall be pleased," I said. "If you don't care for them, just chuck them aside. I had to guess at the size."

"Oh, they are beautiful," she softly exclaimed, snatching them from the table. "Blasdel, why not stay on this side of the mountains? You're a very clever young man if you would only give yourself a chance. Very soon you could go to the House of Burgesses. If you don't care to go into trade you could speculate in land. Father is against it, but if it will be done, you might as well do it as to leave the cream for others."

"Even if I wished to stay, I could not," I replied. "I have much to do over there. Unfinished work. I have promised Colonel Lewis to carry despatches when not scouting. If they can send some one to Fort Pitt in my place I shall serve as scout in the Clinch River Valley. The people down there are badly upset."

"Well, giving yourself for others may be very Christian-like. One must decide for one's self," she said.

"The people over there help one another. They stand together. If I can help them, I shall be helping myself."

"I wish my father could go there and make them see how silly they are," she impatiently declared. "If they would only be friendly with the Indians! It is so simple——"

"I know a fellow about your age," I broke in. "The Indians killed his people on Keeney's Knob ten years ago and stole his little sister. He doesn't know whether she is dead or a captive. His folks were friendly. They were butchered after making a feast for Cornstalk and his warriors. There are many such cases. It would do no good for your father to tell young Cousin and others, who happened to survive, that they are silly."

"Do you mean they would resent it?" she demanded, her chin going up in a very regal manner.

"He could scarcely change their opinions," I mumbled.

We were interrupted by a colored woman bustling in with Colonel Lewis' servant in tow. The man bowed profoundly before Patsy and then informed me:

"Please, Massa Morris, de c'unel 'mires fo' to see yo' at de house right erway. I 'spects it's business fo' de gun'ner. De c'unel mos' 'tic'lar dat say he wants to see yo' to once. Yas, sah. Please, sah."

I dismissed him with a word of my immediate attendance on the colonel. Then I gave my hand to Patsy and said:

"This ends it then. Patsy, my thoughts of you have helped me out of many tight places."

"If you'd only be sensible, Basdel, and stay back here where you belong. Just say the word and father will place you in his office. I'm sure of it."

"So am I sure of it, if you asked it. No, Patsy, it can't be that way. I thank you. I may be an awful failure, but I can always fool myself with hoping for better things. If I was pushed into trade, that would end me."

"Of course you know your limitations better than I do," she coldly said. "Thanks for the pretty moccasins. I may have a chance to wear them soon."

"Do not wear them over the mountains," I begged. "You were never meant for the frontier. Good-by."

I had mounted my horse and was galloping back to Richfield almost before I had realized how definitely I had separated from her. There was so much I had intended to say. My thoughts grew very bitter as I repeatedly lived over our short and unsatisfactory meeting. I recalled patches of the bright dreams filling my poor noodle when I was riding to meet her, and I smiled in derision at myself.

I had carried her in my heart for three years, and because daily I had paid my devotion to her I had been imbecile enough to imagine she was thinking of me in some such persistent way. Patsy Dale was admired by many men. Her days had been filled with compliments and flattery.

My face burned as though a whip had been laid across it when I recalled her frank skepticism of my ability to support a wife. I had a rifle. Several times she had thrust that ironical reminder at me,

which meant I had nothing else. I came to her carrying my rifle. It was unfair to tie a girl with a promise when the wooer had only his rifle.

The damnable repetition kept crawling through my mind. She wanted to impress the fact of my poverty upon me. I worked up quite a fine bit of anger against Patsy. I even told myself that had I come back with profits derived from peddling rum to the Indians, I might have found her more susceptible to my approach. Altogether I made rather a wicked game of viewing the poor girl in an unsavory light.

With a final effort I declared half-aloud that she was not worth a serious man's devotion. And it got me nowhere. For after all, the remembrance of her as she stood there, with her slim white neck and the mass of blue-black hair towering above the upturned face, told me she must ever fill my thoughts.

I reached Richfield early in the evening. Governor Dunmore had retired against an early start for Williamsburg. It was Colonel Lewis' wish that I ride without delay to Charles Lewis' place at Staunton, something better than eighty miles, and confer with him over the situation on the frontier.

"My brother has recently received intelligences from Fort Pitt which state the Indians are anxious for peace," explained the colonel.

"A parcel of lies," I promptly denounced.

"So say I. But the written statements are very

plausible. They have made an impression on Charles. It is very important that he know the truth. It will be much better for you to talk with him than for me to try to send him your statements in writing. Haste is necessary. Leave your horse and take one of mine."

"Have your man bring out the horse. I will start now."

"A prompt response," he said. "And most pleasing. But to-morrow early will do. Spend the night here."

"To-night. Now," I insisted. "I need action."

He gave me a sharp glance, then called his man and gave the order. While my saddle was being shifted he informed me:

"Ericus Dale and John Ward paid us a call. Dale and His Excellency had a rare bout of words. The fellow Ward didn't say much, but he agreed to everything Dale said."

"I know about the way Dale talked," I gloomily said. "I talked with him before he came here. He thinks that Virginia is made up of fools, that only Pennsylvania knows how to handle the Indians."

I swung into the saddle and the colonel kindly said:

"I hope this business of mine isn't taking you away from something more pleasant."

"I thank you, Colonel, but I am quite free. All I ask is action and an early return to the frontier."

I knew the colonel knew the truth. He knew I had paid my respects to the girl and had been dismissed. He stretched out a hand in silence and gave me a hearty handshake; and I shook the reins and thundered up the road to Staunton.

CHAPTER VI

THE PACK-HORSE-MAN'S MEDICINE

CHARLES LEWIS was as popular as he was widely known. He had the gift of attracting men to him on short acquaintance and of holding them as life-long friends. His fame as an Indian-fighter was known throughout the South, his adventures possessing those picturesque elements which strongly appeal to border-folk. During the Braddock and Pontiac Wars his service was practically continuous.

In his home-life he was a kindly, gentle man. I found him playing with his five small children. He greeted me warmly and displayed none of his brother's austerity. During the greater part of two days which I was in his hospitable home I succeeded, I pride myself, in showing him the truth concerning the various reports sent over the line from Pennsylvania.

I know that when I left him he was convinced the war must be fought to a decisive finish before any of our western valleys could be safe. On one point he was very positive: the Cherokees, he insisted,

would not join the Ohio tribes, despite the murder of Oconostota's brother. Could the people of the Clinch and Holston have felt the same confidence, they would have spared themselves much nagging.

I took my time in returning to Salem, for there was much to think over. The bulk of my meditations concerned Patsy Dale. I decided to see her once more before crossing the mountains. I had no hope of finding her changed, but I did not intend to leave a shadow of a doubt in my own mind. I would leave no room for the torturing thought that had I been less precipitate she would have been more kindly.

Yet I had no foolish expectations; I knew Patricia. This last interview was to be an orderly settlement of the whole affair, and assurance that self-accusation should not accompany me to the wilderness. Then with the war over there would be no overmountain ties to hold me back from the Kentucky country, or the Natchez lands.

I reached Richfield just as Colonel Lewis was setting forth to settle some wrangling between two of his captains. It was the old contention over enlistments, each leader charging the other with stealing men. I stopped only long enough to get my horse and to induce the colonel to let me have twenty pounds of powder and ten pounds of lead for the settlers. The lead was sufficient for seven hundred rounds and, divided into one-fourth por-

tions, the powder would give a consciousness of power of eighty riflemen.

It was late afternoon when my fresh mount brought me to Salem, and without any hesitation—for I must move while my resolve was high—I galloped out to the Dale house. The low sun extended my shadow to a grotesque length as I flung myself from the saddle and with an attempt at a bold swagger advanced to find the maid. I am sure my bearing suggested confidence, but it was purely physical.

Inwardly I was quaking and wondering how I should begin my explanation for this second call. I was a most arrant coward when I mounted the veranda. The carefully rehearsed calm of my leather face vanished and I made the discouraging discovery that my features were out of control. The door of the house was open. I rapped loudly and frowned. A shuffling step, which never could be Patricia's, nor yet heavy enough for Dale, finally rewarded by efforts. A colored woman came to the door and ducked her portly form.

I began asking for Patricia, but she recognized me as a recent caller and broke in:

"De massa 'n' de young missy done gwine 'way. Dat onery white man gone wif dem."

"Gone away? John Ward went with them?" I mumbled. "Which way did they ride, Aunty?"

"Dat a-way." And she pointed to the sun, now sliced in half by Walker's Mountain.

"You are sure they made for the mountains?"

"Dey gwine to slam right ag'in' 'em, den ride ober dem," she declared.

So after all my warnings the Dales were foolhardy enough to ride into danger. Ericus Dale would not only stake his own life but even his daughter's on his faith in red men. I recalled Cornstalk's pretended friendship for the whites at Carr's Creek and on Jackson's River and the price the settlers paid for their trustfulness.

"When did they ride?"

"Two days ergo. Bright 'n' early in de mornin'."

I ran to my horse and mounted. As I yanked his head about the servant called after me:

"De missy have dem mogasums wif her."

The first stage of my journey was to Dunlap's Creek, although there was no certainty that the Dales and Ward were taking that route. I had small doubt, however, but that Dale was bound for the home of his cousin on Howard's Creek. Unless he knew of some secret trace over the mountains he would follow the open trail.

He would be more likely to go boldly and openly, I reasoned, because of his belief there was nothing for him to fear. His daughter's convenience would be better suited by the main traveled trails. As I hurried to the west I paused at every habitation and inquired for the travelers. Always the same reply; two men and a woman had been observed.

When I finally reached the Greenwood cabin at Dunlap's Creek I learned I had gained a day because of Patricia's need for rest. She was an odd bundle of contradictions. She felt superior to frontier women, and how they would have smiled at the thought of recuperating after the easy travel from Salem to the creek! Many of the women on the Greenbriar had walked the entire distance over the mountains so that the pack-animals might be used in carrying the jealously guarded and pitiably few household-goods.

It was amazing to contemplate what a difference two or three hundred miles could make in one's environment. Patricia Dale, soft and dainty, was used to the flattery of the town, and, I feared, the attention of many beaux. Her parents had known none of the comfortable places in life at her age; and yet she had responded to her environment, had been petted by it, and now she was a domestic kitten. I wondered if she would respond to her ancestry if placed among arduous experiences. I knew the kitten would, and therein I found hope for Patsy Dale.

I had been greatly shocked when told the girl was being taken over the mountains. Now by some peculiar mental twist I was beginning to enjoy secretly the prospect of seeing her again and in surroundings which harmonized with long rifles and hunting-shirts. On the surface I persisted in my

anger at Dale and vehemently wished her back at Salem. Yet my guilty anticipation endured, and as a sop to conscience I tried to make myself believe there was no danger.

Howard's Creek could not be conquered so long as the settlers kept close to the cabins and fort. I believed that or I should have urged a return of all the women to the east side of the mountains. If the enemy, in force, should lay a protracted siege, Howard's Creek would be remembered among other bloody annals.

But I knew there would be no prolonged attempt to massacre the settlement. Cornstalk was too wise a warrior to weaken his forces for a score of scalps when a general engagement was pending. Let him win that and he could take his time in blotting out every cabin west of the Alleghanies. So after all it was neither difficult nor illogical to convince myself the girl would be safe as long as she kept close to the creek.

Even Dale would not plan to take his daughter beyond the creek. If he attempted it there were men enough to prevent the mad act. Across this line of thought came the recollection of the Grisdols' fate. The girl would be safe at Howard's Creek, but death lined the trace leading thereto. My reason assured me Black Hoof's band had long since departed from the mountains.

My fear that the girl was being led into an am-

bush threw me into a fine sweat; and I pushed on the faster. I reviewed all the circumstances which would preclude the possibility of an Indian attack on the three travelers. There could be no Indians between Dunlap's and Howard's. Black Hoof's losses at the Grisdol cabin, the venomous hatred of young Cousin stalking them day and night and the appearance of Baby Kirst would surely hasten their retreat.

But there would obtrude the terrible possibility of a few raiders hiding along the trace, determined to strengthen their medicine with more white scalps. But never once did I count in favor of the girl Dale's boasted friendship with the Shawnees. Even my most visionary listing of assets could not include that. I made a night-camp half-way across the mountains and dined on cold provisions procured from the Greenwoods.

The morning brought optimism. By this time the girl was safe in the Davis cabin. I finished my prepared food and resumed my journey. I had covered a mile when a mounted figure turning a twist in the trace ahead sent me to the ground. The two of us struck the ground at about the same moment. Our rifles slid across the saddles as if we were puppets worked by the same string. Then a voice called out:

"I won't shoot if you won't."

Of course he was white.

"Jesse Hughes!" I exclaimed, vaulting into the saddle. "These are queer hunting-grounds for you." Then in sudden terror, "Are the Indians back here in the mountains?"

"Devil take worse luck! No," he grumbled as he trotted to meet me. "I'm going out to Greenwood's to see if I can't git a few shoots of powder."

"Have you seen Ericus Dale, the trader?" I anxiously asked.

"Yes, I seen the fool. He was making the creek when I come off. His gal was with him and John Ward. Come pretty nigh potting that Ward feller. He's a white man, but I can't git it out of my noodle that he ain't a' Injun."

"How did Dale's girl stand the journey?"

The query surprised him, and he looked puzzled.

"Stand it?" he slowly repeated. "Why, she ain't sick or hurt, is she?"

I said something about her not being used to riding long distances.

"Long distances!" he snorted. "Wal, if a woman can't foller a smooth trace on a good hoss for a day's ride, she ain't got no business west of the mountains. I can't stick here swapping talk. I've got to push on and git that powder. Curse the luck!"

"The Greenwoods have no powder to spare. He has less than half a pound."

"Black devils in a pipe! Howard's Creek will have to go to making bows and arrers!"

"I've brought twenty pounds of powder and ten of lead from Salem," I added. "Howard's Creek is welcome to it after I've outfitted myself."

"Hooray! That ends that cussed trip. Twenty pounds! Wal, I declare if there won't be some rare killings! Now I'll hustle right back along with you. I've felt all the time that some one would be gitting hair that belonged to me if I come off the creek. Ten pounds of lead! Seven hundred little pills! That'll let Runner, Hacker, Scott 'n' me strike for the Ohio, where we can catch some of them red devils as they beat back home. They'll be keerless and we oughter nail quite a few."

"Crabtree isn't going with you?"

"Ike ain't got no stummick for a reg'lar stand-up fight. He'll hang round the creek and kill when he catches a red along."

"He'll get no powder from my stock to use around the creek," I declared.

Hughes eyed me moodily.

"What odds where they're killed so long as they're rubbed out?" he harshly demanded.

"Women and children are the odds," I retorted. "Crabtree kills friendly Indians. Even young Cousin, who hates reds as much as any man alive, won't make a kill in a settlement unless the Indians are attacking it."

"That's the one weak spot in Cousin," regretted Hughes. "He's a good hater. But he'd have a

bigger count for that little sister of his if he'd take them wherever he finds them. It's all damn foolishness to pick and choose your spot for killing a red skunk. And this friendly Injun talk makes me sick! Never was a time but what half the Shawnees and other tribes was loafing 'round the settlements, pretending to be friends, while t'other half was using the tomahawk and scalping-knife.

"That sort of medicine won't do for me. No, siree! Injuns are a pest, just like wolves and painters, only worse. They must be wiped out. That's my belief and I make it my business to wipe them out. Few men that's got more'n me."

It's a waste of time to talk with a bloody-minded man. Hughes' brother was killed by the Indians. As for that, there was hardly a settler in Virginia who had not lost some dear friend or relative. When the history of the country is written, it will surprise the coming generations to read the many names having opposite them, "Killed by the Indians."

I was sorry I had met Hughes. His company grated on me. It was impossible to think of Patsy Dale with the fellow's cruel babble ringing in my ears. I remained silent and he garrulously recounted some of his many exploits, and with gusto described how he had trapped various victims. It was his one ambition of life. He cared nothing for land.

Offer him all of Colonel Washington's thirty-odd thousand acres on the Ohio and Great Kanawha as a gift, and he would have none of them unless they contained red men to slaughter. He had laid down a red path and it was his destiny to follow it. I had no love for Shawnee or Mingo, but my mind held room for something besides schemes for blood-letting.

And yet it was well for me that I had met Hughes the Indian-hater, and doubly well that I had brought powder and lead so that he had turned back with me. We were riding down the western slope and about clear of the mountains, I trying to think my own thoughts and he talking, talking, his words dripping blood, when ahead in the trace I spied something on the ground that caused me to exclaim aloud.

It was a brightly beaded moccasin, very small, and strangely familiar even at a distance. Hughes saw it and stared at it through half-closed lids. I leaped from my horse and started forward to pick it up.

"Don't touch it;" yelled Hughes. "Come back! Come back!"

I heard him and understood his words, and yet I continued advancing while I mechanically endeavored to guess his reason for stopping me.

"Jump, you fool!" he yelled as I stretched out my hand to pick up the moccasin. And his horse

was almost upon me and covering me with dirt as he pivoted and slid into the bushes, his hindquarters hitting me and hurling me over, half a dozen feet beyond the little moccasin. I landed on my head and shoulders with the crack of a rifle echoing in my dazed ears.

Instinct sent me rolling out of the trace and into the bushes. By the time I gained my knees and had cleared the dirt from my eyes Hughes was working rapidly up the right-hand slope. His horse stood at the edge of the bushes, rubbing noses with my animal. I kept under cover of the growth and halted abreast of the moccasin.

There was a furrow within a few inches of its embroided toe. I broke a branch and pawed the moccasin toward me and picked it up and went back to the horses. Then I took time to examine my prize. It was one of the pair I had given to Patsy Dale. She must have carried it carelessly to drop it in the trace without discovering her loss. I slipped it into my hunting-shirt and sat down to wait for Hughes. It was fully an hour before he came back.

"Couldn't git a crack at him," he growled, his face grim and sullen. "But you was a fool to be took in by such a clumsy trick as that."

"It's an old trick," I conceded, taking the moccasin from my shirt. "If it had been any Indian finery I would have kept clear of it. But this hap-

pens to belong to Ericus Dale's girl. She dropped it coming down the slope."

He heard this in astonishment and scratched his head helplessly.

"Then I must 'a' been asleep, or in a hell of a hurry when I come to this slope," he muttered. "And it ain't just the right kind of a slope to go galloping over. I don't understand it a bit. They was riding into the settlement when I come out. I called to Dale and asked if he'd seen any Injun signs. He told me he hadn't seen any. Then that feller Ward come trotting out the woods, looking like a' Injun, and I was bringing up my rifle to give him his needings when Dale let out a yelp and said he was a white man. Wal, it'll tickle the gal to learn how near her moccasin come to killing you."

"The Indian knew it was there and knew we were coming, and used it for bait," I mused.

"A five-year-old child would know that," was the scornful rejoinder. "But what no five-year-old on Howard's Creek would 'a' done was to go for to git it after I'd called a halt. You must 'a' been foolish in your mind. The Injun took a spot where he could line his gun on the moccasin. The growth cut off any sight of the trace 'cept where the moccasin lay. All he had to do was to line it and shoot when you stooped over it. The second he couldn't see the moccasin he'd know some one's body was between it and him. He heard me bawl out, but

he didn't git sight of you till you was over it, and by that time my old hoss give you a belt and made you keep on moving."

"He undershot, yet as I was bending close to it he would have bagged me," I said. "I have to thank you for saving my life."

"Part of a day's work," he carelessly observed. "Wal, seeing as the skunk has skedaddled, we might as well push on rather smart and tell the fellers there's a loose red round these parts."

When we entered the settlement we saw men and women gathered in front of the Davis cabin, frankly curious to see the newcomers and eager to volley them with questions. I joined the group and through a window beheld Patsy in animated conversation with what women could crowd inside. Mrs. Davis was very proud of her cousin's daughter and was preening herself considerably.

Patsy's cheeks were flushed and her tongue was racing as only a woman's can. As she talked I could see she was trying to get used to the table of split slabs and its four round legs set in auger-holes, the pewter tableware and the spoons and bowls fashioned from wood, and the gourds and hard-shell squash hollowed out for noggings.

With a slant of half-veiled eyes she also was studying the women's linsey petticoats and bare feet, for now that it was warm weather many dispensed with any foot-covering. In turn the women

were openly examining the texture and style of her town gown, and shrilly calling on one another to come and admire her soft leather boots.

I did not see Dale, and Davis informed me he was inspecting the fort. As Ward was not in sight I assumed he, too, was at the fort. Making my way to the window, I caught Patsy's eye and handed her her lost moccasin.

She stared at the moccasin in bewilderment, but what with the newness of her experience and the voluble praise of the women and the open-eyed admiration of the men, she was finely excited. She forgot to ask where I found the moccasin or how I happened to be there. She was in the act of giving me a smile and a nod when Mrs. Davis tugged her to the right-about.

Realizing it was useless to strive for the girl's attention until the neighbors returned to their cabins, I walked to the fort, leading my horse. Hughes was there ahead of me and stood with a group of sullen-faced men who were being addressed by Ericus Dale.

"I say there ain't going to be any war," he cried as I took a position behind him. "The Indians don't want war. They want trade. Take a pack of goods on your horse and walk into a Shawnee village and see how quick they'll quit the war-post to buy red paint and cloth.

"Open a keg of New England rum among the

Mingos and see how quick they'll drop their axes and hunt for tin dippers. Take blankets and beads to the Wyandots and watch them hang up white wampum. Take——"

"Oh, that's all fool talk!" thundered Hughes crowding forward and staring angrily into the trader's deep-set eyes. "You can't lead a pack-hoss fifty miles from this creek without losing your hair, neighbor."

"I can! I will!" wrathfully replied Dale. "I've traded for years with the Indians. I never yet went to them with a gun in my hand. If ever I need protection, they'll protect me. They are my friends. This war is all wrong. You can have it if you insist. But if you'd rather have trade, then you needn't build any more forts west of the Alleghanies."

Hughes laughed hoarsely and called out to the silent settlers:

"What do you fellers say to all this twaddle? Any of you believe it?"

Uncle Dick, whom I had left whetting his knife on the stones of the Davis fireplace, gave a cackling laugh and answered:

"Believe it? No! But it's fun to hear him splutter."

The men smiled grimly. They had held back from affronting their neighbor's cousin. They looked upon Dale much as they looked on Baby

Kirst when he came to the settlement and whimpered because he could not find ripe berries to pick. They were deciding that Dale was mentally irresponsible; only his malady took a different twist than did Baby's. He was an Indian-lover instead of hater. Dale's dark face flushed purple with anger. By an effort he controlled himself and said:

"All right. You men want a fight. I'm afraid you'll have it. But I tell you that if Dunmore would call off that dog of a Connolly at Fort Pitt I could go among the Ohio Indians and make a peace which would last."

"How about the Injuns being willing for us to go down into the Kentucky country?" spoke up Moulton.

"If you want peace with the Indian, you must let him keep a place to hunt and live in. He can't live if you take away his hunting-grounds."

"Then let's take 'em away so they'll die out tarnation fast," cried Elijah Runner.

Drawing himself up and speaking with much dignity, Dale said:

"I am sorry for any of you men who came out here to make homes if you will let a few Indian-killers, who never make homes, spoil your chances for getting ahead."

"We don't go for to kill every Injun we see," said Davis, heretofore silent. "I'm a fambly-man. I don't want Injuns butchered here in the settlement

like as Ike Crabtree done for Cherokee Billy. No sense in that."

"That's what I say, too," agreed another. And this endorsement of Davis' view became quite general. Of course I had known right along that the settlers as a whole did not look with favor upon indiscriminate slaughter of the natives. Dale nodded his approval and said:

"Well, that's something. Only you don't go far enough."

Hughes angrily took up the talk, declaring:

"You cabin-men are mighty tickled to have us Injun-hating fellers come along when there's any chance of trouble. I've noticed that right along."

"Course we are, Jesse," agreed Davis. "But that don't mean we're mighty glad when some of you kill a friendly Injun in the settlement and, by doing so, bring the fighting to us."

"I 'low we've outstayed our welcome," Hughes grimly continued. "You folks foller this man's trail and it'll lead you all to the stake. I'm moving on to-night."

"Don't go away mad, Jesse," piped up old Uncle Dick. "Talk don't hurt nothin'. Stick along an' git your fingers into the fightin' what's bound to come."

"I'm going away to kill Injuns," was the calm reply. "That's my business."

"Hacker, Scott 'n' me will go along with you,"

said Runner. "Now that Howard's Creek has got a trader to keep the Injuns off, we ain't needed here no more."

"I *can* keep the Indians away," cried Dale. "When I offer them my belts, they'll be glad to receive them. You send them a few trade-belts in place of the bloody ax and they'll be your friends, too."

"Bah!" roared Hughes, too disgusted to talk.

"What does the white Injun say?" yelled one of the young men.

He had barely put the query before John Ward stalked through the fort door and stood at Dale's elbow. Speaking slowly and stressing his words in that jerky fashion that marks an Indian's speech in English, he said:

"The trader is right. I have been a prisoner among Indians for many years. I know their minds. Dale can go anywhere among Indians where he has been before, and no hand will be lifted against him."

"You're a liar!" passionately cried Hughes, his hand creeping to his belt.

Ward folded his arms across his deep chest and stared in silence at Hughes for nearly a minute; then slowly said:

"No Indian ever called me that. It's a man of my own race that uses the word to me."

"And a mighty cheap sample of his race,"

boomed Dale, his heavy face convulsed with rage. "A cheap killer, who must strike from behind! Faugh! It's creatures like you——" With an animal screech Hughes jumped for him. Before we could seize the infuriated man Ward's arm was thrust across his chest and with the rigidity of a bar of iron stopped the assault. Before Hughes could pull knife or ax from his belt we hustled him into the background. His three friends scowled ferociously but offered no interference. It was obvious that the settlers as a body would not tolerate any attack on Dale.

Inarticulate with rage, Hughes beckoned for Hacker, Scott and Runner to follow him. A few rods away he halted and called out:

"Dale, I'll live to hear how your red friends have danced your scalp. Then I'll go out and shoot some of them. That white Injun beside you will be one of the first to stick burning splinters into your carcass. He's lived with redskins too long to forget his red tricks. Come on, fellers."

This sorry disturbance depressed the spirits of the settlers. War was on, and there was none of the Howard's Creek men who believed that any change in their attitude could prevent the Ohio Indians from slaying at every opportunity. No matter how much they might decry the acts of Hughes and his mates in time of peace, there was no denying the fighting-value of the quartet when it came to war.

No word was spoken until the last of the four killers had filed away to secure their horses and be gone. Then Davis said:

"Time to eat, Ericus. Let's go back and see how the women-folks is gettin' along."

"Keep that white scum from this creek until I can carry a bag of talk to Cornstalk and Logan and you won't need any armed bullies to protect you," said Dale.

"We ain't askin' of 'em to look after us, nor you with your white belts, neither," shrilly proclaimed Uncle Dick.

Some of the younger men laughed.

Dale reddened, but turned to walk with his cousin without making any answer. He all but bumped into me.

"Why, Morris!" he greeted, staring at me in surprise. "You bob up everywhere. Will you go with me to the Scioto villages?"

"Go as what?" I cautiously asked. The men gathered closer about us.

"Go as a trader, carrying white wampum. Go to make peace with the Shawnees," slowly replied Dale, his eyes burning with the fire of fanaticism.

"Not hankering for slow fires, nor to have squaws heap coals on my head, I must refuse," I retorted. "But I'll go with you or any man, as a scout."

"In your blood, too," he jeered. "I didn't suppose you'd been out here long enough to lose your head."

"I'd certainly lose it if the Shawnees got me," I good-naturedly retorted. My poor jest brought a rumble of laughter from the men and added to Dale's resentment, which I greatly regretted.

John Ward glided to my side and said:

"You talk like a child. I have been long among the Indians. They did not take my head."

I didn't like the fellow. There was something of the snake in his way of stealthily approaching. I could not get it out of my head that he must be half-red. Had he been all Indian, I might have found something in him to fancy; for there were red men whom I had liked and had respected immensely. But Ward impressed me as being neither white nor red. He stirred my bile. Without thinking much, I shot back at him:

"Perhaps they did something worse to you than to take your head. Are you sure they didn't take your heart?"

He turned on his heel and stalked away. Dale snarled:

"You're worse than Hughes and those other fools. You even hate a poor white man who has been held prisoner by the Indians. He comes back to his people and you welcome him by telling him he's a renegade. Shame on you!"

"No call for that sort of talk to Ward at all!" denounced Davis.

"What call had Ward to say he was a fool?" loudly demanded one of the young men.

"I shouldn't have said that," I admitted, now much ashamed of my hot-headedness. "I'll say as much to Ward when I see him next. If he'd look and act more like a white man then I'd keep remembering that he is white. But I shouldn't have said that."

"Morris, that's much better," said Dale. "I'll tell him what you said and you needn't eat your words a second time in public. I admire you for conquering yourself and saying it."

Uncle Dick did not relish my retraction, and his near-sighted eyes glared at me in disgust.

"Too much talkin'. Scouts oughter be out. Our friends, th' killers, have quit us."

Glad to be alone, I volunteered:

"I'll scout half the circle, striking west, then south, returning on the east side."

Moulton, a quiet, soft-spoken fellow, but a very demon in a fight, picked up his rifle and waved his hand to his wife and little girl and trotted in the opposite direction, calling back over his shoulder:

"I'll go east, north and half-down the west side."

I finished on the north leg at the point where Moulton had commenced his scout. I made no discoveries while out. I walked to the fort and was glad to see that Moulton had but recently come in. I returned to the Davis cabin and passed behind

it. So far as I could observe no sentinels had been posted on the east side of the clearing. In front of the cabin burned a big fire and there was a confusion of voices.

I gained a position at the end of the cabin, and from the shadows viewed the scene. It was old to me, but new to Patsy, and she was deeply interested. The young men had erected a war-post, and had painted the upper half red. Now they were dancing and cavorting around the post like so many red heathens, bowing their heads nearly to the ground and then throwing them far back. They were stripped to the waist and had painted their faces, and as they danced they stuck their axes into the post and whooped and howled according to the Indian ceremony of declaring war.

"I don't like it!" I heard Dale protest.

"But the boys only wanted Patsy to see how the Injuns git ready for war," defended Mrs. Davis. "An', lor'! Ain't she all took up by it!"

"But it's the way the border men declared war after the murder at Yellow Creek," declared Dale. "They stripped and painted and struck the post and danced around it."

"They'll be through mighty soon now, Ericus," soothed Davis, who was uneasy between his fears of displeasing his wife's cousin and giving offense to the young men. "They meant well."

"All such actions mean ill for the settlers," growled Dale. "They'd best finish at once."

Davis did not have to incur his neighbors' ill-will by asking the dancers to cease their ceremony, as Dale's speech was closely followed by a volley from the west side of the clearing. A dancer went down, coughing and clawing at his throat, while yelps of surprise and pain told me others had been wounded. I raised my rifle and fired toward the flashes.

With the promptness of seasoned veterans the young men kicked the fire to pieces and grabbed up their rifles and advanced toward the hidden foe, their movements being barely perceptible even while within reach of the light streaming from the cabins.

It was not until I had fired and was reloading that I was conscious of Patsy's ear-splitting shrieks. I heard her father fiercely command her to be still, then command Davis to recall the young men now lost in the darkness. A stentorian voice began shouting:

"All women to the fort! Put out all lights!"

One by one the candles were extinguished. Patsy was silent, and across the clearing came the low voices of the women, driving their children before them and urging them to hurry. Dark forms were discernible close at hand and were those settlers apportioned to defend the fort.

Davis was commanding his wife to take Patsy to the fort while there was yet time, and she was

refusing. The savages must have heard the men and women leaving the outlying cabins, for they started to rush from the woods only to fall back before a brisk volley from the young men now scouting well to the front.

I walked to the cabin door just as the war-whoop of the Shawnees announced an attack in force. I was standing by Patsy's side, but she did not see me. She had both hands clapped over her ears, her lips parted but uttering no sound. Now there came a rush of feet and the young men fell back, some making into the fort, others, as previously assigned, entering the cabins close to the fort. Three came to the Davis cabin, and I entered with them, leading Patsy. Some one, I think it was Davis, dragged Dale inside.

The trader seemed to be paralyzed, for he had remained voiceless during the stirring events. And it had all been a matter of a few minutes. I jumped through the doorway just as a young man began closing it. The Shawnees were yelling like demons and approaching to close range very cautiously, feeling out each rod of the ground.

The sally of the young men had taught them they could not have all things their own way. I scouted toward the fort to make sure all the women and children had made cover, but before I could reach the log walls I heard Dale's voice shouting for attention. I dropped behind a stump, and as the sav-

ages ceased their howling I heard him hoarsely crying:

"It is the Pack-Horse-Man speaking. Do the Shawnees fire guns at the Pack-Horse-Man? My friends live here. Do the Shawnees hurt the friends of the Pack-Horse-Man? I give you a belt to wash the red paint from your faces. I give you a belt to make the road smooth between the Greenbriar and the Scioto. By this belt the nettles and rocks shall be removed from the road. I will cover the bones of your dead, if any fell to-night, with many presents."

He was either very brave or crazy. For now he left the cabin and began walking toward the hidden Shawnees, his confident voice repeating the fact he was the red man's friend, that he brought white belts, that the red and white men should eat from one dish, and that a hole should be dug to the middle of the earth and the war-ax buried there and a mighty river turned from its ancient bed to flow over the spot so that the ax could never be found.

His amazing boldness brought the hush of death over cabins and forts. My horse, secured in the small stockaded paddock near the fort, whinnied for me to come to him, and his call in that tense stillness set my nerves to jumping madly. Dale was now close to the warriors. Every minute I expected to see a streak of fire, or hear the crunch of an ax. Trailing my rifle and bent double, I stole after him. From the forest a deep voice shouted:

"The belts of the Pack-Horse-Man are good belts. Black Hoof's warriors do not harm the friends of the Pack-Horse-Man. Sleep with your cabin doors open to-night and you shall hear nothing but the call of the night birds and the voice of the little owl talking with the dead."

I now discovered that the Shawnees had silently retreated to the woods at the beginning of Dale's advance. The declaration of peace as given by the Indian—and I was convinced it was the famous Black Hoof talking—was in the Shawnee tongue. Dale faced to the cabins and fort and triumphantly interpreted it. From deep in the forest came a pulsating cry, the farewell of the marauders, as they swiftly fell back toward New River. I was suspicious of some Indian trick and yelled a warning for the men to keep in the cabins.

Dale became very angry, and unbraided me:

"It's the like of you that spoils the Indian's heart. You men have heard what the Black Hoof says. You men and women of Howard's Creek are foolish to believe this young fool's words. The Shawnees have gone. You heard their travel-cry. They have left none behind to harm by treachery. I told you I could keep the Indians from attacking this settlement. Could your friends, the killers, have sent them away so quickly? I think not. Open your doors. Light your candles. Make merry if you will. There is nothing in the forest to harm you."

"Keep inside till I and some of the young men have scouted the woods. Three men from the fort will be enough," I loudly shouted.

Dale was furious, but that was nothing when the women and children had to be remembered. Soon a soft pattering of moccasins, and three youths stood before me. Choosing one, I set off in the direction the Indians apparently had taken. The other two were to separate, one scouting south and the other north, to discover any attempt at a surprise attack by swinging back to the creek in a half-circle.

My companion and I, although hampered by the darkness, penetrated some miles toward New River. In returning, we separated, one swinging south and the other north. The first morning light was burning the mists from the creek when I reentered the clearing. My companion came in an hour later. The other two had returned much earlier, having had a much shorter course to cover. We all made the same report; no signs of Indians except those left by them in their retreat.

I sat outside the Davis cabin and Patsy brought me some food. She was very proud of her father and carried her small figure right grandly. Her attitude toward the women was that of a protector; and they, dear souls, so thankful to be alive, so eager to accept the new faith, fairly worshiped the girl.

The one exception was the Widow McCabe.

She paid homage to no one. And while she said nothing to the chorus of admiring exclamations directed at the trader there was the same cold glint in the slate-gray eyes, and she walked about with her skirts tucked up and an ax in her hand.

I made no effort to talk with Patsy. Her frame of mind was too exalted for speech with a skeptical worm. She smiled kindly on me, much as a goddess designs to sweeten the life of a mortal with a glance. She smiled in gentle rebuke as she noted my torn and stained garments and the moccasins so sadly in need of patching.

"You silly boy! It wasn't necessary. When will you learn, Morris?" It was not intended that I should answer this, for she turned away graciously to receive the blessings of the women. Thus, vicariously, was Ericus Dale recognized as a great man. And the trader walked among the morning clouds. For some hours the savor of his triumph stifled speech, and he wandered about while the women paid their tribute through his daughter.

Nor were the men lacking in appreciation. The younger generation remained silent, secretly wishing their bravery and marksmanship had scattered the foe, yet unable to deny that Dale's medicine had been very powerful. Those with families stared upon him as they might gaze on one who had looked on David.

They congregated around the Davis cabin after

the morning meal and forgot there was much work to be done. They were eager to renew their fires of this new faith by listening to him. And after his exaltation had softened enough to permit of speech the trader once more harangued them on his influence over the natives. He was constantly in motion, his swinging arms keeping a path clear as he strode through the group and back again and addressed the mountains and horizon. He was too full of the sweets of a peaceful victory to confine his utterance to any individual, and he spoke to the whole frontier.

He concluded a long and eloquent speech by saying:

"So after all, as you settlers have learned, the Ohio tribes, yes, and all tribes, will always hark to the one word—trade. They are now dependent upon the white man for traps and guns, even their women's clothing. Trade with them and they will remain your friends, for your goods they must have.

"You can plant your war-posts three feet apart along the whole length of Virginia, and you'll always have work for your rifles and axes until the last Indian-hunter is killed. I admit they can be exterminated, but you'll pay an awful price in doing it. But give them a chance to live, carry trade-belts to them, and you shall have peace."

Even Uncle Dick, the aged one, had nothing to say. But it was Patsy I was watching while Dale

talked. She never took her eyes from him, and her gaze was idolatrous in its love. She believed in his powers implicitly; and to bask in the reflection of his greatness was the sweetest triumph she had ever experienced. Throughout that day the scouts were busy in the forest, ranging very far on the track of Black Hoof's band. When they began dropping in after sundown all their reports were alike.

There were no Indian-signs besides those left by the departing Shawnee band. This band, said the scouts, was very large and quite sufficient to cause the settlement much trouble and inevitable losses. There was no mistaking the story told by the trail. The Indians had marched rapidly, swinging north.

Every emotion, unless it be that of love, must have its ebb; and by nightfall the settlers were returning to their old caution. Dale did not relish this outcropping of old habits. Throwing open the door of the Davis cabin after Davis had closed and barred it, he cried: "Let us have air. There is no danger. You're like silly children afraid of the dark. Your scouts have told you there are no Indians near. Yet the minute the sun sets you imagine the woods are full of them. I will go out alone and unarmed and I will shout my name. If any Shawnee who was not in Black Hoof's band hears my voice he will come to me. After he learns I have friends here on Howard's Creek, he will go away. Give me time to act before that scoundrel Connolly

can stir up more trouble and I'll make a lasting peace between the Greenbriar, the Clinch and the Holston and the Ohio tribes; and I'll make Dunmore look like a fool."

His overpowering personality, his massive way of asserting things made a deep impression on the simple folks. They asked only for a chance to plant and reap. When he went out alone that night he brought them deep under his spell. As he plunged into the forest and stumbled about he took pains to advertise his presence. Unknown to the settlers, I trailed him. I was within ten feet of him when he halted and shouted his name, and in their language called on the Shawnees to come to him.

For half an hour he wandered about, proclaiming he was the Pack-Horse-Man, the ancient friend of the Shawnees and Mingos. Let him be a fool according to Jesse Hughes' notion, yet he was a very brave man. He had the courage to attempt proof of his belief in the honesty of the Shawnees.

I trailed him back to the cabin door. I saw the girl's radiant face as she proudly threw her arms about his neck. I saw the great pride in his own face as he stood in the middle of the floor and harshly demanded:

"Now, who will you believe; Dale, the trader, or Hughes, the killer?"

It was all mighty dramatic, and it was not sur-

prising that it should affect the settlers keenly. It shook my skepticism a bit, but only for the moment. If I could not feel a full confidence in John Ward, born white, how could I place a deep and abiding trust in those who were born red? Had not Cornstalk and other chiefs, the best of their breed, sworn friendship to the whites in Virginia in 1759 and during Pontiac's War? Had they not feasted with old friends, and then, catching them off their guard, chopped them down? Black Hoof had drawn off his raiders; so far, so good. But I looked to my flints none the less carefully that night and made the rounds to see that reliable men were on guard. The night passed with nothing to disturb the settlement's rest.

CHAPTER VII

LOST SISTER

PATSY stood in the doorway of the Davis cabin when I approached to pay my respects. She was wearing a linsey petticoat and a short gown for an overskirt. Her mass of wonderful hair was partly confined by a calico cap, and on her feet were my gift moccasins. She believed she was conforming to the frontier standard of dress, but she was as much out of place as a butterfly at a bear-baiting. Before I could speak she was advancing toward me, her hands on her hips, her head tilted back, and demanding:

"What do you say now about the influence of trade and the trader?"

She did not ask that she might learn my opinion; she firmly believed there was but one thing I could say. She was in an exultant mood and happy to parade her triumph. Of course she was proud of her father and was viewing him as the deliverer of the settlement. Without waiting for me to answer she excitedly continued:

"And your long rifle! And the rifles of all these

other men! What good would they have done? They spoke night before last, and the Indians kept up their attack. Then my father spoke and the Indians have gone! John Ward, who was out scouting when the Indians attacked, says they greatly outnumbered us and were led by Black Hoof, one of their greatest chiefs. He says they would have captured or killed us if not for my father. Now, Mr. Rifleman, what do you think about the influence of an honest trader?"

I would not have shaken her pride in her father even had that accomplishment been possible. To convince her—which was not possible—that her father's success was no success at all, that Black Hoof's behavior was simply an Indian trick to lull us into a foolish sense of security, would mean to alienate even her friendship, let alone killing all chance of her ever reciprocating my love.

While not deeply experienced with women, my instinct early taught me that my sex is most unwise in proving to a woman that she is wrong. She will hold such procedure to be the man's greatest fault. It is far better to let her discover her own errors, and even then pretend you still cling to her first reasoning, thereby permitting her to convince you that she was wrong.

On the other hand there was, I sensed, a peril in the situation, a peril to Howard's Creek, that made my seeming acquiescence in her opinion very dis-

tasteful to me. I had no proof of my suspicions except my knowledge of Indian nature and my familiarity with frontier history. A red man can be capable of great and lasting friendships. But to judge him, when he is at war, by the standards of the white race is worse than foolish.

Cornstalk, according to his blood, was a great man. Under certain conditions I would trust him with my life as implicitly as I would trust any white man. Under certain conditions I would repose this same trust in him although he was at war with my race. But when placed among the combatants opposing him, I knew there was no subterfuge even that great warrior would not use to attain success.

So I said nothing of my doubts, nothing of my vague suspicions concerning John Ward. I felt a strong antipathy toward the fellow, and I realized this dislike might prejudice me to a degree not warranted by the facts. To put it mildly, his status puzzled me. If he were an escaped prisoner then he had committed one of the gravest sins in the red man's entire category.

To be taken into the tribe, to be adopted after his white blood had been washed out by solemn ceremony, and then to run away, meant the stake and horrible preliminary tortures should he be recaptured. As a prize such a runaway would be more eagerly sought than any settler. And yet the fel-

low was back on the fringe of imminent danger and ranging the woods unconcernedly. His captivity must have taught him that every war-party would be instructed to bring him in alive if possible.

"What's the matter with you, Basdel?" demanded the girl sharply as she turned and walked by my side toward the Davis cabin. "You act queer. Do you begrudge giving my father his due? Aren't you thankful he was here to stop the attack?"

"If he were here alone, yes. But I am terribly worried because you are here, Patsy."

"But that's doubting my father's influence!" she rebuked, her eyes lighting war-signals.

"When one has loved, one stops reasoning," I quickly defended. "I can not bear to see even a shadow of a chance of harm come to you."

"That was said very pretty," she smiled, her gaze all softness.

Then with calm pride she unfastened several strings of white wampum from around her slender waist and holding them up simply said:

"My father's belts."

Among the strings was a strip some seven or eight rows in width and two hundred beads long. It was pictographic and showed a man leading a pack-horse along a white road to a wigwam. The figures, like the road, were worked in white beads, the background being dark for contrast.

Refastening them about her waist, she said:

"There is no danger for me here so long as I wear my father's belts. There are none of the Ohio Indians who would refuse to accept them and respect them. When they see the Pack-Horse-Man walking along the white road to their villages they will lift that belt up very high."

"When one sees you, there should be no need of belts," I ventured.

She smiled graciously and lightly patted my fringed sleeve, and ignoring my fervid declaration, she gently reminded:

"Even if I had no belts I am no better than any of the other women on the creek. Don't think for a moment I would hide behind my father's trade wampum. The belts must protect all of us, or none of us. But there is no more danger for me than there is for them even if I threw the belts away. Not so much; because I am Ericus Dale's daughter. Basdel, it makes me unhappy to fear that when we leave here the danger may return to these people. I carry my safety with me. I wish I could leave it for them. I wish a general and lasting peace could be made."

"God knows I wish the same," I cried. "As for being no better than these other women, I agree to that." And she became suddenly thoughtful. "In judging from a Howard's Creek standpoint you are not so good in many ways. Rather, I should say, not so valuable."

"You measure a woman's value as you do your guns and horses," she murmured.

Her calmness was rather ominous, and I feared I had bungled. Yet my meaning should have been transparent even to a child. To make sure she had not misconstrued me I explained:

"You know what I mean, no matter how I appear to measure you. In making a new country a woman on the edge of things must have certain qualities that the town woman does not possess, does not need to possess. It's because of these qualities that the new country becomes possible as a place to live in; then the town woman develops. Two hundred miles east are conditions that resulted from the rugged qualities of the first women on the first frontier.

"Those first women helped to make it safe for their children's children. Now it's behind the frontier and women of your kind live there. In other words"— I was growing a trifle desperate, for her gaze, while persistent, was rather blank—"you don't fit in out here. I doubt if you know how to run bullets or load a gun or throw an ax. I'm sure you'd find it very disagreeable to go barefooted. It isn't your place. Your values shine when you are back in town. That's why I'm sorry you're here."

"I haven't shot a rifle, but I could learn," she quietly remarked.

"I believe that," I heartily agreed. "But could

you take an ax and stand between a drove of children and what you believed to be a band of Indians about to break from cover and begin their work of killing? I saw the Widow McCabe do that. I saw the little Moulton woman, armed with an ax, run to meet the attack."

"It's hardly sensible to ask if I could have done this or that. Who knows what I could have done? I shall never have to deal with what is past. And there was a time, I suppose, when all these women were new to the frontier. At least I should be allowed time to learn certain things before you apply your measuring-rod, sir!"

"That's right," I admitted. "I was rather unjust, but the fact remains that just now you are out of place and not used to this life and its dangers."

"I feel very cross at you. You pass over my father's great work for the settlement with scarcely a word. You complain because I am here and look different from Mrs. Davis. I can't help my looks."

"You are adorable. Already see the havoc you've wrought among the unmarried men. Observe how many times each finds an errand that takes him by this cabin door. How slow they are to scout the woods and seek signs. No; you can't help your looks, and it results there are few men who can resist loving you. There's not a youngster in this settlement who's not up to his neck in love with you already. And there's not one of them who

does not realize that you would be the poorest mate he could pick so long as he must live on the border."

"I'm glad to hear just what you believe about me," she muttered. "But you're bewildering. It seems I'm a rare prize for any man and a most uncomfortable burden."

"Oh, dash it all, Patsy! You understand that what I've said applies to Howard's Creek. If we were standing two hundred miles due east I should say directly the opposite."

Of course she understood my true meaning, and of course in her heart she agreed with it. She was town-bred and therefore was intended for the town. Yet so strangely stubborn and eccentric is a woman's reasoning that she can feel resentment toward a man because he has brains enough to comprehend the same simple truth that she comprehends.

Had there been no danger from the Indians I could have scored a bull's-eye with her by baldly declaring her to be the most valuable asset the frontier ever had received; and she would have dimpled and smiled and but faintly demurred, knowing I was a rock-ribbed liar for asserting it, and yet liking me the more for the ridiculous exaggeration. That is one reason why it is more sensible and much more satisfactory to quarrel with a man than a woman.

With the tenacity which her sex displays when believing a male is trying to avoid some issue, she coldly reminded:

"Talk, talk, but not a word yet as to what my father did two nights ago."

"It was one of the most splendid exhibitions of faith and moral courage I ever witnessed."

Her gaze grew kindly again and she halted and stared up into my eyes, flushed with pleasure, and waited to hear more encomiums.

"I never before saw one man rush out and confront a war-party. Then his going out alone last night and prowling about through the dark forest! That was magnificent. Your father is one of the bravest men I ever saw."

She rubbed a pink finger against her nose and tilted her head and weighed my words thoughtfully. Obviously I had omitted something; for with a little frown worrying her fair forehead she began:

"But—but there's something else you haven't said. What about his influence over the Indians? You thought him foolish to take me over the mountains. You now admit you were foolish to think that?"

She was waiting for me to complete my confessional. If the element of danger had been absent how gladly I would have lied to her! How quickly I would have won her approval by proclaiming myself the greatest dolt in Virginia and her father the wisest man in the world! But to accede to everything she said and believed would be an endorsement of her presence on the creek. I had had no

idea of ousting myself from her good graces when I went to find her that morning. Now the test had come, and her welfare was involved; to be true to her as well as to myself I was forced to say:

"I still think it was most dangerous for you to come here. I believe your father acted very unwisely, no matter how much be believes in his influence over the Indians. And I would thank God if you were back in Williamsburg."

Her hands dropped to her side. The smiling eyes grew hard.

"Go on!" she curtly commanded.

"I've damned myself in your opinion already. Isn't that enough? Don't make me pay double for being honest."

"Honest?" she jeered. "You've deliberately dodged my question. I asked you what you thought of my father's power with the Indians. You rant about his wickedness in bringing me here. For the last time I ask you to answer my question and finish your list of my father's faults."

As if to make more steep the precipice down which from her esteem I was about to plunge there came the voice of her father, loudly addressing the settlers.

"You people ought to wake up," he was saying. "Was it your rifles, or was it trade that stopped an attack on these cabins night before last? When will you learn that you can not stop Indian wars

until you've killed every Indian this side the mountains? Has there ever been a time when you or your fathers could stop their raids with rifles? Well, you've seen one raid stopped by the influence of trade."

As he paused for breath the girl quietly said:

"Now, answer me."

And I blurted out:

"I don't have any idea that Black Hoof and his warriors will hesitate a second in sacking Howard's Creek because of anything your father has said or could say. I honestly believe the Shawnees are playing a game, that they are hoping the settlers are silly enough to think themselves safe. I am convinced that once Black Hoof believes the settlers are in that frame of mind he will return and strike just as venomously as the Shawnees struck in the old French War and in Pontiac's War, after feasting with the whites and making them believe the red man was their friend."

She straightened and drew a deep breath, and in a low voice said:

"At last you've answered me. Now go!"

I withdrew from the cabin and from the group of men. Dale's heavy voice was doubly hateful in my ears. The settlement was a small place. Patsy had dismissed me, and there was scarcely room for me without my presence giving her annoyance. I went to the cabin where I had left my few belong-

ings and filled my powder-horn and shot-pouch. I renewed my stock of flints and added to my roll of buckskins, not forgetting a fresh supply of "whangs" for sewing my moccasins. While thus engaged Uncle Dick came in and began sharpening his knife at the fireplace.

"Why do that?" I morosely asked. "You are safe from Indian attacks now the trader has told the Shawnees you are under his protection."

He leered at me cunningly and ran his thumb along the edge of the knife and muttered:

"If some o' th' varmints will only git within strikin'-distance! They sure ran away night before last, but how far did they go? Dale seems to have a pert amount o' authority over 'em; but how long's he goin' to stay here? He can't go trapezin' up 'n' down these valleys and keep men 'n' women from bein' killed by jest hangin' some white wampum on 'em."

"What do the men think?"

"Them that has famblies are hopin' th' critters won't come back. Younger men want to git a crack at 'em. Two nights ago th' younkers thought Dale was mighty strong medicine. A night or two of sleep leaves 'em 'lowin' th' creek may be safe s'long as he sticks here. Some t'others spit it right out that Black Hoof is playin' one o' his Injun games. If that pert young petticoat wa'n't here mebbe we could git some o' th' young men out into th' woods for to do some real scoutin'.

"If my eyes was right I'd go. As it is, th' young folks keep runnin' a circle round th' settlement, lickety-larrup, an' their minds is on th' gal, an' they wouldn't see a buf'lo if one crossed their path. Then they hustle back an' say as how they ain't seen nothin'. I 'low some o' th' older men will have to scout."

"I'm going out. I'll find the Indians' trail and follow it," I told him.

"That'll be neighborly of you. If they chase you back an' git within stickin'-distance I'll soon have their in'ards out to dry."

I decided to leave my horse, as the travel would take me through rough places. Shouldering my rifle, I struck for the western side of the clearing. Dale had disappeared, gone into the Davis cabin, I assumed, as John Ward was lying on the ground near the door. I hadn't seen much of Ward for two days. Davis and Moulton were drawing leather through a tan trough, and I turned aside to speak with them. They noticed I was fitted out for a scout and their faces lighted a bit.

"Ward's been out ag'in and says the reds went north toward Tygart's Valley. He follered 'em quite some considerable. If you can find any new signs an' can fetch us word——"

"That's what I'm going out for, Davis. How do you feel about the doings of night before last?"

He scratched his chin and after a bit of hesitation answered:

"Wife's cousin is a mighty smart man. Powerful smart. I 'low he knows a heap 'bout Injuns. Been with 'em so much. But we're sorter uneasy. More so to-day than we was yesterday. This waiting to see what'll happen is most as bad, if not worse, than to have a fight an' have it over with. Once a parcel of Injuns strikes, it either cleans us out or is licked an' don't want no more for a long time. Still Dale has a master lot of power among the Injuns. But we'll be glad to know you're out looking for fresh footing. Their trail oughter be easy to foller, as there was a smart number of 'em had hosses."

"I'll find the trail easy enough, and I'll satisfy myself they are still making toward the Ohio or have swung back," I assured him. "While I'm gone keep the young men in the woods and post sentinels. Don't get careless. Don't let the children wander from the cabins. I'm free to tell you, Davis, that I don't believe for a second that you've seen the last of Black Hoof and his men. Have all those living in the outlying cabins use the fort to-night."

After reaching the woods, I turned and looked back. Dale was standing in the doorway with one hand resting on the shoulder of John Ward. Ward was talking to Patsy, whose dainty figure could not be disguised by the coarse linsey gown.

The man Ward must have lost some of his taciturnity, for the girl was laughing gaily at whatever he was saying. I observed that Dale was still feel-

ing very important in his rôle of protector, for as he stepped from the doorway he walked with a swagger. Well, God give that he was right and that the menace had passed from Howard's Creek.

I found the trail where it turned back toward Tygart's Valley, even as John Ward had reported, and followed it up the Greenbriar. The country here was very fertile on both sides of the river and would make rich farms should the danger from the Indians ever permit it to be settled. Farther back from the river on each hand the country was broken and mountainous and afforded excellent hiding-places for large bodies of Indians, as only rattlesnakes, copperheads, wolves and wildcats lived there.

My mood was equal to overdaring, and all because of Patsy Dale. When the sun swung into its western arc I halted where a large number of warriors had broken their fast. I ate some food and pushed on. After two miles of travel I came to a branching of the trail. Two of the band had turned off to the northeast. My interest instantly shifted from the main trail to the smaller one, for I assumed the two were scouting some particular neighborhood, and that by following it I would learn the object of their attention and be enabled to give warning.

That done, the footing would lead me back to the main band. The signs were few and barely sufficient to allow me to keep up the pursuit. It

was not until I came to a spring, the overflow of which had made muck of the ground, that I was afforded an opportunity to inspect the two sets of tracks. One set was made by moccasins almost as small as those I had given to Patricia Dale.

But why a squaw on a war-path? It was very puzzling. From the amount of moisture already seeped into the tracks I estimated the two of them had stood there within thirty minutes. My pursuit became more cautious. Not more than twenty rods from the spring I came to a trail swinging in from the east, as shown by a broken vine and a bent bush.

The newcomer had moved carelessly and had fallen in behind the two Indians. I stuck to the trail until the diminished sunlight warned me it would soon be too dark to continue. Then I caught a whiff of burning wood and in ten minutes I was reconnoitering a tiny glade.

My first glance took in a small fire; my second glance dwelt upon a scene that sent me into the open on the jump. An Indian sat at the foot of a walnut-tree, his legs crossed and his empty hands hanging over his knees. At one side crouched a squaw, her long hair falling on each side of her face and hiding her profile. In a direct line between me and the warrior stood Shelby Cousin, his rifle bearing on the warrior.

My step caused him to turn, expecting to behold another native. The man on the ground made no

attempt to take advantage of the interruption; and in the next second Cousin's long double-barrel rifle was again aiming at the painted chest.

"Don't go for to try any sp'ilin' o' my game," warned Cousin without looking at me.

"They're scouts from a big band of Shawnees now making toward Tygart's Valley," I informed him. "Can't we learn something from them?"

"I'm going to kill this one now. The squaw can go. Crabtree would snuff her out, but I ain't reached the p'int where I can do that yet."

"You coward!" cried the squaw in excellent English.

Cousin darted a puzzled glance at her. His victim seemed to be indifferent to his fate; nor did the woman offer to interfere.

"She's a white woman!" I cried. For a sunbeam straggled through the growth and rested on the long hair and revealed it to be fine and brown and never to be mistaken for the coarse black locks of an Indian.

"White?" faltered Cousin, lowering his rifle. "Watch that devil, Morris!"

I dropped on a log with my rifle across my knees. Cousin strode to the woman and caught her by the shoulder and pulled her to her feet. For a long minute the two stared.

"Shelby?"

The words dropped from her lips in a sibilous

crescendo as her blood drove her to a display of emotion.

Cousin's hands slowly advanced and pushed back the long locks. He advanced his face close to hers, and I knew his slight form was trembling. Then he staggered back and jerkily brought his arm across his eyes.

"God! It's my sister!" I heard him mutter.

I leaped to my feet, crying out for him to be a man. He remained motionless with his arm across his face, helpless to defend himself. I turned to the woman. Whatever light had shone in her eyes when memory forced his name from her lips had departed.

Her face was cold and immobile as she met my wild gaze. There was a streak of yellow paint running from the bridge of her nose to the parting of her brown hair. Her skin was as dark as any Shawnee's, but her eyes held the blue of the cornflower.

I tried to discover points of resemblance between her and the boy and succeeded only when she turned her head in profile; then they were very much alike. He lowered his arm to look over it, and she watched him without changing her expression.

With a hoarse cry he straightened and answering the impulse in his heart, sprang toward her, his arms outstretched to enfold her. She gave ground, not hastily as though wishing to avoid his embrace,

but with a sinuous twist of her lithe body, and she repulsed him by raising her hand. He stared at her stupidly, and mumbled:

"You remember me. You called my name. You know I am your brother. You know we lived on Keeney's Knob. You remember the creek——"

"I remember," she quietly interrupted. "A very long time ago. Very long. I am a Shawnee now. My heart is red."

Her words stunned him for a bit, then he managed to gasp out, "Who is this man?" And he glared at the warrior seated at the foot of the tree.

"My husband."

The boy's mouth popped open, but without uttering a sound he stooped and grabbed for his rifle. I placed my foot on it and seized his arm and pleaded with him to regain his senses before he took any action. During all this the warrior remained as passive as the tree-roots against which he half-reclined.

After a brief hysterical outburst Cousin stood erect and ceased struggling with me. And all the time his sister had watched us speculatively, her gaze as cold and impersonal as though she had been looking at a rock. It was very hideous. It was one of those damnable situations which must end at once, and to which there can be no end. For the boy to kill his sister's husband was an awful thing to contemplate.

I pulled the lad back and softly whispered:

"You can't do it. The blood would always be between you two. She has changed. She believes she is red. Take her aside and talk with her. If she will go with you make for the mountains and get her to the settlements."

"An' him?"

"I will wait an hour. If you two do not return before an hour— Well, he will not bother you."

At first he did not seem to understand; then he seized my free hand and gripped it tightly. Taking his rifle, he approached the girl and took her by the arm.

"Come," he gently told her. "We must talk, you and I. I have hunted for you for years."

She was suspicious of us two, but she did not resist him.

"Wait," she said.

She glided to the savage and leaned over him and said something. Then she was back to her brother, and the two disappeared into the woods.

I drew a line on the savage and in Shawnee demanded:

"Throw me the knife she gave you."

Glaring at me sullenly, he flipped the knife toward the fire and resumed his attitude of abstraction. I had never killed an unarmed Indian. I had never shot one in cold blood. The office of executioner did not appeal, but repulsive as it was it would not

do for the boy to kill his savage brother-in-law. Lost Sister and the savage were man and wife, even if married according to the Indian custom.

Nor would it do for a woman of Virginia to be redeemed to civilization with a red husband roaming at large. No. The fellow must die, and I had the nasty work to do. The glade was thickening with shadows, but the sunlight still marked the top of an elm and made glorious the zenith. When the light died from the heavens I would assassinate the man.

This would give him a scant hour, but a dozen or fifteen minutes of life could make small difference. Then again, once the dusk filled the glade my impassive victim would become alert and up to some of his devilish tricks. He did not change his position except as he turned his head to gaze fixedly at the western forest wall. One could imagine him to be ignorant of my presence.

"Where does Black Hoof lead his warriors?" I asked him.

Without deflecting his gaze he answered:

"Back to their homes on the Scioto."

"The white trader, the Pack-Horse-Man, spoke words that drive them back?"

It was either a trick of the dying light, or else I detected an almost imperceptible twitching of the grim lips. After a short pause he said:

"The Shawnees are not driven. They will pick

up the end of the peace-belt. They will not drop it on the ground again. Tah-gah-jute (Logan) does not wish for war. He has taken ten scalps for every one taken from his people at Baker's house. He has covered the dead. The Pack-Horse-Man spoke wise words."

"This white woman? You know she must go back to her people."

Again the faint twitching of the lips. When he spoke it was to say:

"She can go where she will or where she is made to go. If she is taken to the white settlements she will run away and go back to the Scioto. Her people are red. After the French War, after Pontiac's War, it was the same. White prisoners were returned to the white people. Many of them escaped and came back to us."

His voice was calm and positive and my confidence in the girl's willingness to return to civilization was shaken. She had been as stolid as her red mate in my presence, but I had believed that nature would conquer her ten years' of savagery once she was alone with her brother.

The light had left the top of the elm and the fleecy clouds overhead were no longer dazzling because of their borrowed splendor. I cocked my rifle. The savage folded his arms as he caught the sound, but his gaze toward the west never wavered. To nerve myself into shooting the fellow in cold

blood I made myself think of the girl's terrible fate, and was succeeding rapidly when a light step sounded behind me and her low voice was saying:

"My brother is at the spring. You will find him there."

I rose and dropped the rifle into the hollow of my left arm and stared at her incredulously. It had happened before, the rebellion of white prisoners at quitting their captors. Yet the girl's refusal was astounding.

"You would not go with him?"

"I am here. I go to my people," she answered. "He is waiting for you. The squaws would laugh at him. He is very weak."

With an oath I whirled toward the Indian. Had he made a move or had he reflected her disdain with a smile, his white-red wife surely would have been a widow on the spot. But he had not shifted his position. To all appearances he was not even interested in his wife's return. And she too now ignored me, and busied herself in gathering up their few belongings and slinging them on her back. Then she went to him, and in disgust and rage I left them and sped through the darkening woods to the spring where I had first seen the imprints of her tiny moccasins.

Cousin was there, seated and his head bowed on his chest, a waiting victim for the first Indian scout who might happen along.

I dragged him to his feet and harshly said:

"Come! We must go. Your white sister is dead. Your search is ended. Your sister died in the raid on Keeney's Knob."

"My little sister," he whispered.

He went with me passively enough, and he did not speak until we had struck into the main trail of the Shawnees. Then he asked:

"You did not kill him?"

"No."

"It's best that way. There 're 'nough others. They'll pay for it."

I abandoned my plan of following the war-party farther and was only anxious to get my companion back to the protection of Howard's Creek. We followed the back-trail for a few miles and then were forced by the night to make a camp. I opened my supply of smoked meat and found a spring. I did not dare to risk a fire. But he would not eat. Only once did he speak that night, and that was to say:

"I must keep clear o' the settlements. If I don't I'll do as Ike Crabtree does, kill in sight o' the cabins."

In the morning he ate some of my food; not as if he were hungry, but as if forcing himself to a disagreeable task. He seemed to be perfectly willing to go on with me, but he did not speak of the girl again.

When we drew near the creek he began to look

about him. He at once recognized the surroundings and made a heroic effort to control himself. When we swung into the clearing there was nothing in his appearance to denote the terrible experience he had passed through.

Now that we were back I was beset by a fear, that the sight of Patricia in all her loveliness would be an overwhelming shock to his poor brain. It was with great relief that I got him to the Moulton cabin without his glimpsing Patsy.

"You can tell 'em if you want to. S'pose they'll l'arn it some time," he said to me as we reached the door and met Mrs. Moulton and her little girl. With that he passed inside and seated himself in a corner and bowed his head.

I drew Mrs. Moulton aside and briefly explained his great sorrow. With rich sympathy she stole into the cabin and began mothering him, patting his shoulders and stroking the long hair back from his wan face.

My own affairs became of small importance when measured beside this tragedy. I had no trepidation now in facing Patricia. I walked boldly to the Davis cabin and thrust my head in the door. Only Davis and his wife were there.

"Where are the Dales?" I bruskly asked.

"Gone," grunted Davis in disgust.

"Gone back home?" I eagerly asked.

"What do you think!" babbled Mrs. Davis.

"Cousin Ericus has took that gal down toward the Clinch. He 'lows now he's goin' to keep the Injuns out of that valley—"

"Good God! Why did you let them go?"

Davis snorted angrily, and exclaimed:

"Let 'em go! How ye goin' to stop her? 'Twas she that was bound to be movin' on. Just made her daddy go."

"When did they start?"

"Right after you lit out. Seems 's if th' gal couldn't git shut o' this creek quick 'nough."

I ran from the cabin to get my horse and start in immediate pursuit. By the time I reached the animal, well rested during my absence, I became more reasonable. After all Black Hoof was traveling north. There would be small chance of another band raiding down the Clinch for some time at least. I needed rest. Night travel would advance me but slowly. I would start early in the morning.

CHAPTER VIII

IN ABB'S VALLEY

ORIOLES and mocking-birds sang in the openings, and startled deer fled before our advance as Shelby Cousin and I rode for the Clinch. The heat of July was tempered by a breeze out of the north, and the heavens were filled with hurrying white argosies. So it had ever been since the white man came to these pleasant ridges and rich bottomlands; perfume, song, gracious valleys, and the lurking red evil.

Cousin had regained his self-control overnight and outwardly appeared to be thoroughly composed. He talked but little, and then only when I took the lead. I refrained from mentioning the tragedy of yesterday and the sun was noon-high before he brought the matter up.

"I couldn't kill that feller," he abruptly informed me.

There was no preface to indicate whom he meant, but I knew and nodded sympathetically.

"An' I'd ruther kill him than all the rest o' the Injuns 'tween here 'n' Detroit," he added after a long pause.

"She will never come back to us?" I asked; for he had given no details of his interview with his sister.

"She'll never come back. For a time I'd a mind to drag her away, but she was so cold to me, so Injun-like in her way of lettin' me know it wouldn't do no good, that I give it up. You see she was only a child when captured. Women caught when much older'n her have gone for to choose a wigwam to a cabin."

"Do you wish I had shot him?"

"No. If it could happen in a open fight—that's different. It wouldn't do any good to hurt her by killin' him. But I wish he was dead!"

We stopped and ate and rode several miles before either of us spoke again. Then I said:

"There's a girl ahead, about your age."

He was disturbed to hear it and I feared he would wish to leave me.

"I don't want her captured by Indians," I added.

"God forbid it!" he hoarsely cried.

Having prepared him for seeing Patricia, I shifted his line of thought by asking, "What do you think of John Ward?"

"Injun."

I said nothing and after a few minutes he went on:

"Took by Injuns when a little boy, just like Tavenor Ross and George Collet was took. I've

heard traders tell about the three of 'em. When they're took so young they grow up just as much Injuns as if they was born red. Ward's that way. Must be. Look at the sister I lost!"

"But Ward comes back to settlements. He even crosses the mountains. He says he escaped."

"He wouldn't be travelin' round these parts if he was a' 'scaped prisoner. As for crossin' the mountains he might 'a' gone for to see what he could see. Cornstalk has spies all up an' down the frontier. I 'low them two we met yesterday was bent on spyin'. God! That's a' awful thought! But I ain't got no sister. It was a red woman we seen. She 'n' her man was spyin'. If not that why should they be makin' east into the mountains? I 'low he was to stay hid while 'nother 'scaped prisoner rode down into some settlement."

From that speech on I do not remember that he spoke of his sister as being any kin of his. When he must mention her he usually styled her, "That woman who's turned red."

To get his thoughts away from her I rattled on about my trip to Richfield and told of my experiences in returning over the mountains. After I had narrated Hughes' quick action in saving me from an assassin's bullet Cousin jerked up his head and said:

"Moccasin, one you give to that there young woman we're now followin'?"

I nodded, and he continued:

"I 'low it was John Ward who tried to pot you. He stole the moccasin and sneaked back an' laid the trap. Prob'ly laid it for whoever come along without knowin' who would walk into it. You was mighty lucky to have Hughes there." I had never connected Ward with that attempt on my life.

"The Dales believe Ward to be what he pretends —an escaped prisoner," I said.

"Course they do," sighed the boy. "The country's full of fools. After he's led 'em to the stake an' they begin to roast they'll wake up an' reckon that there's something wrong with his white blood."

His matter-of-fact way of expressing it made my blood congeal. It was unthinkable to imagine Patsy Dale in the hands of the Indians. I urged my horse to a sharper clip, but Cousin warned me:

"No use hurryin'. Save your nag for the time when you'll need him mighty bad. I 'low we can overtake 'em afore anything happens."

We had discovered no fresh Indian-signs. Black Hoof and his braves were far north of us. We knew scouts were ranging up the Clinch and Holston, and that the people were forting from Fort Chiswell to the head of the Holston, and that practically all the settlers had left Rich Valley between Walker's Mountain and the north fork of the Holston.

Nearly all the settlers had come off the heads of

Sandy and Walker's Creeks and were building forts at David Doack's mill on the Clinch and on the head waters of the middle fork of the Holston, as well as at Gasper Kinder's place in Poor Valley.

Cornstalk must know the time was near when the whites would send an army against the Shawnee towns north of the Ohio, and he was too cunning a warrior to risk sending many of his men into southwestern Virginia. Black Hoof was there with a large force, but he could not tarry without leaving the Scioto towns uncovered.

Therefore my opinion coincided with my companion's, once my first flurry of fear was expended. The Dales were in no immediate danger, and if any hostile band was below New River it would be a small one. Once more I allowed my horse to take his time. I began to find room for wondering how I was to overcome my embarrassment once we did come up with the Dales.

Ericus Dale would rant and indulge in abuse. Patricia would be remembering my lack of faith in her father's influence over the natives. She would want none of my company. But if Cousin and I could trail them unseen until they entered a small settlement at the head of the Bluestone, where they would be sure to pause before making for the head of the Clinch, we could pretend we were scouting far south and had met them by accident; then we could ride on ahead of them.

Their trail was simple to follow. The Dales were mounted and Ward was afoot and leading a pack-horse. We came to their several camps, and at each of these I observed the girl was wearing my moccasins. When Cousin would behold the small imprint his face would twist in anguish. Poor devil!

For three days we leisurely followed them, and each sunrise found me entertaining fewer fears for the girl's safety. We timed our progress so as to pitch our last camp within a mile of the settlement in Abb's Valley on the Bluestone, intending to reconnoiter it for signs of the Dales before showing ourselves.

The valley was about ten miles long and very narrow and possessing unusually fertile soil. It was named after Absalom Looney, a hunter, who claimed to have discovered it. Cousin informed me there were three cabins and a small fort in the valley when he last visited it. At that time one of the families was planning to cross the mountains and sacrifice the summer's planting.

"Mebbe they've all come off since then. Or them that's stayed may be killed an' sculped by this time," he added.

"Whatever may have happened to the settlers is all finished by this time and there can be no danger for the Dales," I declared.

"I 'low they're packin' their worst danger along with 'em," he mumbled.

"Meaning John Ward?"

"Meaning him," was the terse answer.

This set all my fears to galloping again, and they rode one another close. What if Ward were the creature Cousin pictured him? Then he must have designs on the Dales, and he would persuade them to travel in a direction which would lead them into a trap. If Ward were "red" he already had planned just where he would bag his game.

Against this line of reasoning was our failure to discover fresh signs, and the fact that Black Hoof's band was making north. Then one fear drew ahead of all others, and I was thrown into a panic lest Ward plotted to count his coup unaided and would murder the trader and his daughter. I rose from the fire and announced my intention of proceeding to the valley settlement that night. I told Cousin my fears.

"That's just so much foolishness," he told me. "If Ward's up to them sort o' tricks he'd 'a' made his kill when only a few miles from Howard's Creek, when he was that much closer to Black Hoof's band. Then he'd 'a' sneaked north to j'in his red friends and dance his sculps. But we've found all their camps, and nothin' has happened. They're safe so far."

It was near morning before I could sleep and I awoke at sunrise. Cousin was missing. I investigated and discovered he had gone on foot, so I

assumed he was out to kill some meat to pack into the settlement. I prepared something to eat and finished my portion and was kneeling to drink from a spring when I heard him coming through the woods. He was running and making much noise, and I had a presentiment that something very evil had happened. Before he came into view he called my name sharply.

"All right! I'm here! What is it?" I answered.

"Devil's come for his pay!" he snapped as he burst through the last of the growth. "Only two miles west fresh tracks of big war-party makin' south. They're makin' for Abb's Valley. That white-Injun devil fixed it up. Goin' to gobble the settlers along with your fool friends. If we can't stop 'em they'll git every white in the valley sure's Sabba'day preachin'!"

Until that moment I had never dreamed of the exquisite torture that the threat of an Indian raid could induce. I secured my weapons and mounted without realizing what I was doing. My first coherent thought was one of amazement to behold Cousin stuffing smoked meat into his pack with one hand while the other held a tough morsel for his teeth to tear at. He ate like a famished wolf.

"Can't fight without some linin'," he mumbled. "An' we'll take what's left along. May git in a corner an' have mighty little time for cookin'."

I urged my horse into a gallop. Cousin tore after

me, angrily calling on me to wait. I was in no mood to wait, and endeavored to get even more speed out of my animal. Then Cousin brought me to my senses by yelling:

"All right! Kill 'em if you want to!"

I pulled in and he drove alongside, crying:

"First thing you know you'll be runnin' into a nest o' them devils. Their path and our path draws together an' enters the valley as one path."

"But we must reach the valley ahead of them!"

"Can't be did," he discouraged. "Best we can do is to sneak up on 'em without bein' seen."

As a last hope I suggested:

"Perhaps after all they know nothing about the Dales."

"They know 'bout Abb's Valley. It's Black Hoof's band. Made off north, then swung back down here, keepin' clear o' Howard's Creek. If they clean out Abb's Valley they'll clean out the creek on their way home."

Scant consolation in all this. It was a great relief to reach the Bluestone and prepare for action. We spanceled our horses in a tiny opening well surrounded by woods. Cousin was familiar with the country and led the way. Instead of making for the mouth of the narrow valley we gained the end of one of its enclosing ridges and scouted along the slope.

When we halted and Cousin carefully parted the

bushes I observed we were behind three cabins and high enough up the slope to see over them. The valley at this point was not more than fifty rods wide, and appeared to be even less because of the long walls stretching away for ten miles.

Some children were laughing at their play and were hidden from view as long as they kept close to the door of the middle cabin. A dog was growling and barking, but as he did not join the sport of the little ones we concluded he was tied. One of the red cabins, that nearest to the mouth of the valley, did not appear to be occupied.

Through the small window of the cabin farthest up the valley I glimpsed two persons moving about when they passed between the window and the open door. A few rods farther out toward the middle of the valley and nearer the Bluestone than the unoccupied cabin, were the four walls of what had been intended for a fort. It lacked the roof. For some reason the men had suspended work on it, being too few to complete it, or else deciding the cabins furnished sufficient protection.

Three men, all strangers to me, now entered our line of vision as they walked out from the shelter of the middle cabin. Cousin told me their names. The tall man with the long black beard was Granville, one of the original settlers. He and his wife and two children, with Mrs. Granville's sister, lived in the middle cabin. A short swarthy man was Nate

Dicks. He had sent his family over the mountains and was staying behind to gather the season's crops, explained Cousin. The third man was along in years and walked with a limp.

"That's the old Englishman. All the name he goes by. No kin to any one on this side the ocean, he says. He lives with the Granvilles. The empty cabin belonged to the Drakes. They pulled out early this spring. Dicks lives in the t'other-end cabin."

"I make out at least two people in there now," I murmured.

"They'll be the Dales. Dicks's prob'ly sleepin' in the Granville cabin."

My heart behaved badly for a minute.

"Listen to that pup!" softly exclaimed Cousin, his brows drawing down. "The fools have him tied up, an they ain't got sense 'nough to hark to what he's tryin' to tell 'em."

"We're here ahead of the Indians. Let's go down," I urged.

"Wait! Look across!" He pointed to the wall of woods opposite our hiding-place. John Ward had broken cover and was stalking toward the cabins. The black cloth he wore around his head gave him a sinister, piratical appearance and his feet tracked like an Indian's.

I would have descended the slope but Cousin clutched my arm, whispering:

"If there ain't no Injuns across the valley we can afford to wait a bit. If there is, our goin' down would hurry up their attack. It won't do to call out an' scare 'em so they'll scatter. As they are now they can fort themselves in the shake of a dog's tail."

Two women, Mrs. Granville and her sister, now walked back of the middle cabin and picked up some wood. Both were barefooted, and I was close enough to read the expression of constant fear on each face. As they stooped for the wood their gaze was continually roving over the woods on our ridge, and often their fingers fumbled for a fagot while their eyes persisted in examining the forest.

Now Dale and Patsy emerged from their cabin and walked to meet Ward. Cousin groaned aloud as he beheld the girl. There was something in her appearance to remind him of his lost sister. Ericus Dale greeted Ward with a wide flourish of his hand. Ward was emotionless as a Shawnee chief. Granville and Dicks hurried to join the three, anxious no doubt to learn the result of Ward's scouting.

His report seemed to please the men, for Granville laid aside his rifle and began chopping a long log into fireplace lengths. Dicks walked toward the middle cabin, lustily singing:

"Ye patriot souls who love to sing,
What serves your country and your king,
In wealth, peace, and royal estate;

Attention give whilst I rehearse
A modern fact in jingling verse."

This song, six or seven lengthy stanzas in all, was written by Mr. George Campbell, an Irish gentleman, and was popular along the frontier. It was sung to the tune of the *Black Joke,* and commemorated the successful efforts of Captain James Smith to prevent Philadelphia traders from sending weapons of war to the northwest tribes shortly after the treaty of 1765 was concluded.

Dicks was finishing the first stanza as he entered the cabin. He broke off sharply to rebuke the dog. Soon he came out with a bag. At about a hundred yards from the cabin, and farther up the valley than any of them, was the lick-block. Dicks was walking toward this. Several horses broke from the growth across the valley and ran toward the cabins.

"Almost act like they was skeered," whispered Cousin.

"Coming in to be salted," I corrected as the horses swerved and galloped toward the block. Dicks was ambling along slowly and reverting to his song. The dog suddenly darted from the cabin and streaked after Dicks, a piece of rawhide trailing from his neck. As he ran he made a great outcry. Dicks was very angry to have his vocal efforts interrupted, and he halted and swung the bag of salt in an attempt to hit the dog, all the while commanding

him to go back. The horses were now at the block and stepping about uneasily.

"I never guessed that! Come on! Something will bu'st loose in a minute!" groaned Cousin.

We started to slide down the bank, when a terrible tragedy took place before our eyes. As Dicks was emptying the salt on to the lick-block the horses sprang back and bolted in alarm, and an Indian's topknot, decorated with wild-turkey feathers, bobbed up from behind the block. Dicks seemed to be paralyzed. The savage struck him with his ax and the unfortunate man went down, dead before he lost his footing. In the next second the dog, a huge brute of mongrel breed, cleared the block and closed his jaws on the murderer's neck.

This was a signal for Cousin's prophecy to come true. A deafening chorus of howls burst from the woods opposite the cabins, and a volley of bullets rained among the settlers. Mrs. Granville and the two children dropped. The old Englishman, standing nearer the cabins, staggered and turned around two or three times. Granville, unharmed, picked up the body of his wife.

The old Englishman was very brave, for he limped forward and managed to gather up the children, one under each arm. Granville's sister was practical enough to secure her brother-in-law's rifle and ax. The three, with their dead, made for the middle cabin.

All this happened in the wink of an eye. The Dales and Ward, walking toward the end cabin when Dicks was killed, halted and stood as if stupefied. None of the bullets had reached them. The girl seized her father's arm and led him to shelter. He was unhurt, but he moved with shuffling steps, much like a tavern-loafer soggy from rum.

We ran to enter the nearest cabin, which happened to be Granville's, but the door was slammed and barred before we could round the corner.

"In here!" sharply cried Cousin, darting through the doorway of the empty cabin.

As I piled in after him I saw Patsy and Dale entering their cabin, but Ward, the white Indian, was running to cover up the valley. And not a savage had shown himself with the exception of the one who had counted coup at the lick-block. This fellow was still in sight and extremely busy.

With our door ajar we watched the ghastly struggle between the faithful mongrel and the assassin. The Indian had lost his ax but had managed to draw his knife. The dog's teeth were buried in his throat before he could get his blade loose. I raised my rifle but Cousin laughed and knocked it aside and cried:

"Let him make his kill! It's his coup!"

The warrior staggered clear of the block, his desperate plight blinding him to all else. His eyes were protruding. He stabbed blindly. I cried out

in pain as I saw the knife sink to the hilt. But the faithful beast had locked his jaws and the weight of his body was already ripping the red throat open. Dead dog and dying warrior fell side by side. The dog had counted the first coup for the whites.

Now we caught our first view of the enemy. A long line of Shawnees emerged from the woods, running and leaping and jumping from side to side, sinking behind stumps and vanishing behind the scattered trees.

"We've got time to make the ridge back o' here," spoke up Cousin. "We's fools to come in here. S'pose we go."

"You go! I must stick," I told him.

"We can do 'em more good out in the open than by bein' cooped up in here," he quietly reasoned.

"You go. I can't leave the girl."

"Then bar the door," he commanded.

I did so, and through a loophole knocked over a savage who had paused in the open to brandish a war-ax thickly decorated with either feathers or scalps.

"Good! We'll make a fine fight of it!" grimly said Cousin as he stepped from a loophole at the back of the cabin. "It's too late for us to make the ridge now. It's crawlin' with the vermin."

His bearing was exceedingly cheerful as he posted himself at the front of the cabin, his double-barrel rifle ready for a snap-shot. He fired the two barrels almost together, and laughed boisterously.

"Two tryin' to hide behind one small tree," he explained. "Got one dead an' sp'iled t'other."

As yet not a shot had been fired from the other two cabins. A voice called from the Granville cabin. I found a chink in the wall and beheld the face of the Englishman peering from the small end window.

"Who's there?" he kept demanding in a shrill voice.

"Two white scouts. Get to shooting!"

He could not see me but he heard me, and vanished to help in the defense. Cousin had reloaded and was watching the valley closely. Bullets were plunking into the log walls, but I knew none of the savages were exposing themselves, else my companion would be shooting. From the Granville cabin several shots were fired without any effect so far as we could make out. Then again the Englishman was calling us. I went forward.

"Hear what I say?" he cried.

I answered that we could.

"Ericus Dale says for us to stop shooting or he can't save us," he informed us.

"He can't save himself!" I yelled back.

"He thinks he can save all of us."

"He couldn't save the man at the lick-block," I reminded.

"Aye. There's sorry truth in that."

"This valley's a trap. John Ward, the white Indian, led him and his daughter into it," I shouted.

"God help and pity us!" he groaned. Then more calmly, "Ward came back from the woods this morning and said there were no signs of Indians."

"He met them and talked with them, and planned how they should surprise you people. The warrior at the lick-block knew Dicks would discover him, so he showed himself and made his kill."

"Aye. That is reasonable thinking."

"What losses in there?" I asked. I thrust my knife-blade between the logs so he might know where I was standing and cease rolling his eyes in his efforts to locate me.

His old face screwed up in pain.

"Mistress Granville and the two children, shot dead. Perhaps it's best that way. I'm wounded—that don't count. You going to keep on shooting?"

"As long as we can pull trigger."

"I'll tell Granville. He wants to save his sister if he can."

"Then he must fight. Tell him so," I warned.

I turned back to Cousin. He was scowling savagely through his peephole. "Take the back side 'n' watch for signs on the ridge," he mumbled. "Them out front are huggin' dirt an' not tryin' to git nearer. They're waitin' for somethin'."

At the back of the cabin I found a tiny chink and applied my eye. My first thought was that a comet was streaming down into my face. The long war-arrow, weighted with a blazing mass of pitch-

smeared moss, stuck in a log a few inches below my peephole. From the ridge came a howl of triumph.

By thrusting my knife-blade through the hole and against the shaft of the arrow I managed to dislodge it, and it burned itself out against the huge bottom log. We did not fear fire until the arrows stuck in the roof. The same thought was in Cousin's mind. He did not look around, but he had smelled the smoke and he directed:

"Climb up an' work the roof-poles apart a bit so's you can knock 'em off the roof when they land."

I soon had the poles slightly separated in two places. As I finished a dozen flying brands poured down on the Granville cabin and ours. One arrow lodged on our roof close to the eves. Two were burning on the ridgepole of the Granville cabin. The others either stuck harmlessly in the logs or overshot and stood so many torches in the ground. By means of the table I scrambled back to the roof and managed to knock the menace to the ground. While I was thus engaged Cousin fired both barrels.

"What luck?" I asked as I jumped to the floor.

"Just bein' neighborly," he growled as he rapidly loaded. "Shot them two arrers off the next roof."

Suddenly the savage howling ceased; nor were there any more fire-arrows. Then the Englishman began shouting. He was once more calling us. I answered and wriggled the knife-blade between the logs. Sure of my attention he loudly informed us:

"Dale passes the word for us to stop fighting. Says he's going to save us."

"To the devil with Dale!" snarled Cousin, showing his teeth like a wolf.

"He's going out to talk with 'em," added the Englishman.

"Lord! What a fool!" lamented Cousin.

"He's going now," continued the Englishman.

I darted to Cousin's side and peered out. We heard the bar drop from the end cabin; then Dale came into view, walking with a swagger toward the concealed savages. In one hand he held up a string of white wampum. And as he slowly advanced he shouted in the Shawnee language:

"Do my brothers fire on their brother? Do they harm their brother's friends? Does the Pack-Horse-Man ask his red brothers to be kind only to have his words fall on dead ears? I bring you belts. My daughter in the cabin also brings belts to the Shawnees and Mingos and the Delawares."

"Let our white brother come close," called a deep guttural voice.

"That'll be Black Hoof himself," excitedly muttered Cousin, darting his gaze over the valley in search of the stone or log which hid the great chief from view.

"Don't shoot! They'll butcher him if you do!" I warned.

"They'll worse'n butcher him if I don't," gritted

Cousin. Yet he held his fire, for the excellent reason he could see nothing to shoot at.

"Tell your people not to fire," again called Black Hoof's powerful voice.

Dale faced the cabins and waved his white wampum, crying:

"I am saving your lives. You men in the lower cabin, throw down your arms!"

"Like thunder!" grunted Cousin.

"He's fairly among them!" I gasped.

Dale had come to a stop and was turning his head and glancing from one point to another on the ground as he talked. His voice had its old confident ring, and there was a slight smile on his lips as he rehearsed his friendship for the red people and reminded them how often he visited their villages and smoked their pipes.

When he ceased Black Hoof called out:

"We will lift a peace-pipe to our good friend, the Pack-Horse-Man. We will cover his friends with the smoke. Let him tell his friends not to be afraid and to throw down their guns."

Dale was sure of Granville's and the Englishman's behavior, and he addressed his warning to Cousin and me, calling on us in a stentorian voice to offer no resistance if we valued our lives. He ended by yelling:

"Catahecassa, war-chief of the Shawnees, spares your lives."

Without giving us time to speak, he waved a hand and commanded:

"It's all right, Patricia! Come out!"

"Stay where you are!" I screamed, my voice muffled by the four stout walls. I jumped to tear the bar from the door, but Cousin hurled me aside, panting:

"Too late! God! To think such a woman should walk into their bloody trap!"

His words sent me to the loophole. Patricia Dale was walking composedly toward her father, her slim hands holding up her belts. She winced as she passed the lick-block and got a glimpse of the dead savage and the dead dog. Then her gaze remained steady on her father's calm face.

Black Hoof said something, but there was a pounding in my ears which prevented me from hearing it. I guessed it, though, when Dale called out:

"All you who would be spared come out and leave your guns behind!"

He had barely spoken before the Englishman's voice excitedly called:

"You two scouts in there."

I gave him heed and he informed me: "Granville and his sister say they are going out. Do you go out?"

"We shall stay here. It's better for you to die where you are," I told him.

"Ay, I think it's better myself. Well, I'm old and hungry to be with the children again."

The Englishman was a brave man, and very sensible. He recognized Fate when it paused to stare him in the eye. My companion was panting for breath and was standing back so as to rest the muzzle of his rifle just inside the loophole. A glance revealed his deadly purpose. A tall warrior was now on his feet. I knew him to be Black Hoof. I had seen him at Fort Pitt during one of those rare lulls between wars.

Cousin was fairly out of his head with the lust to kill the chief, but the Shawnee took no chances. He was careful to keep the girl and her father between him and the cabins. I pushed Cousin's gun aside and fiercely upbraided him for placing the Dales' lives in jeopardy.

"You fool!" he cried. "They're gone already. Are you, too, blind? If you love that gal out there and want to do her the greatest kindness a man can ever do to a border woman, shoot her!"

Granville began shouting:

"Me 'n' my sister are comin' out. We surrender. Tell 'em, Mr. Dale! God knows 'nough blood's been spilt."

I heard their cabin door open. Then it closed with a bang and we heard the heavy bar drop into place. For a moment I believed they had changed their minds; then they crossed our line of vision,

the man walking ahead with empty hands held high, his sister walking behind and wildly waving a white cloth. It was the Englishman, skeptical, because of our advice, who dropped the bar.

Cousin began muttering under his breath. I soon discovered the reason. John Ward was approaching the group from the opposite side of the valley and trying to keep some of the whites between him and our cabin. The nearer he drew to the group, the easier this maneuver was. Ward had made a half-circuit of the valley and was advancing through the lines of hidden braves. Cousin would have tried a shot at the renegade if not for fear of instant reprisal on the girl. It was horrible to hear him curse and moan as he nursed the set of triggers.

"Shut up!" I whispered. "Watch them close!"

I meant Granville and his sister; for as they entered the zone held by the enemy I observed a clump of low bushes dipping and swaying behind them. The woman saw something that frightened her, for she pressed close to her brother and shook the white cloth toward the ground. The grotesque fancy came into my head that she would do the same thing if she wanted to shoo some chickens out of a garden.

Granville and his sister walked up to Black Hoof, the woman still waving the cloth to make sure the chief beheld it and recognized its sacred character. Dale turned to give Cousin, the Englishman and me

one last chance to save our lives; and the hideous work began.

John Ward seized Patricia from behind, holding her by her arms as a bulwark against our lead. Black Hoof with a lightning gesture raised his ax and struck Dale with the flat of it, sending him crashing to the ground. Almost at the same moment two devils leaped from the ground and with their axes struck Granville and his sister from behind. Black Hoof dropped behind his log the moment he struck Dale.

Ward remained standing, sheltered by the girl. But the two who had killed Granville and his sister forgot us in their lust to secure the scalps. I got one as he was kneeling on the man, and Cousin shot the other through the head before he could touch the woman. I shall never forget the terrible scream which burst from the lips of Patricia Dale. Then she went limp and her head sagged over Ward's arms, and he began to walk backward with her to the forest.

I ran to the door and Cousin stuck out his foot and tripped me, and my head hit against the logs, and for a minute confused me beyond the possibility of action. When I would have renewed my efforts to pursue and die in attempting the rescue of the girl Ward was dragging her into the woods. Cousin's arm was around my neck, and as he pulled me back he passionately cried:

"Will it help her to git killed? The ground's alive with 'em! You can't more'n show your head afore they'd have your hair!"

I got to a loophole and looked out. Several guns banged and the bullets pattered into the logs. There was no sign of life in the valley beyond this scattering volley, however. Ward and the girl were gone. The dead Indian and dog were partly in view among the weeds beside the lick-block. The gown of the dead woman made a little patch of melancholy color against the green of the grass and ranker ground growth. Granville had been dragged behind some bushes to be scalped. I came near firing when I beheld two Shawnees making for the timber.

"Fellers we potted," murmured Cousin. "They've hitched cords to 'em an' are draggin' 'em to the woods so's no one'll git their hair."

From the Granville cabin a gun roared loudly; and an Indian, clawing at his bloody breast, shot up in the heart of a clump of bushes and pitched forward on his face.

"Lawdy! But the Englisher must 'a' used 'bout a pint o' buckshot!" exclaimed Cousin admiringly. "Pretty smart, too! He traced the cord back to where th' Injun was haulin' on it, an' trusted to his medicine to make the spreadin' buckshot fetch somethin'. Wish he had smoothbores an' a few pounds o' shot!"

Yells of rage and a furious volley against the two

cabins evidenced how the enemy viewed the Englishman's success. Again the smoothbore roared and a handful of balls scoured another thicket. A warrior leaped from cover and started to run to the woods. Cousin shot him off his feet before he could make a rod.

Our admiration for the smoothbore and its wholesale tactics was beyond expression. The Indians, also, thoroughly appreciated its efficacy, and there was a general backward movement toward the woods. No savage showed himself except for a flash of bronze leg, or the flutter of a hand, too transient for even Cousin to take advantage of. The Englishman fired again, but flushed no game.

"We oughter be goin'," Cousin mused. "But the ridge behind us is still alive with 'em. Reckon we must wait till it gits dark."

"Wait till night? Oh, I can't do that!" I cried.

"Your gal may be skeered to death, but she ain't been hurt any yet," he encouraged. "She's safe till they git her back to the towns. Black Hoof is too smart to hurt her now. If he gits into a tight corner afore he reaches the Ohio he'll need her to buy an open path with. She ain't in no danger s'long as he wants her on hand to swap if the settlers git him penned."

"No danger? And in the hands of that damned renegade!"

"Catahecassa is boss o' that band. Ward was

only a spy. They may burn your gal when they git back on the Scioto where every one can enjoy it. But she won't be hurt any this side o' the Ohio. Our first job is to git clear o' this cabin an' valley. Then we must head those dogs off an' do the next job right."

His words cleared my mind of madness. Instead of the dark forest, forty rods away, marking the end of everything, I need not entirely despair until the girl reached the Scioto.

"They've hitched a rope to Dale an' are draggin' him to the woods. The damn fool ain't dead yet. Black Hoof fetched him a crack with the flat of his ax, but they'll roast him to a frizzle by 'n' by if our medicine don't fetch him out of it."

The man had been grossly mistaken and I pitied him. I wondered what he would think of the influence of trade on red heathens at war when he regained his senses! Surely he would learn the torments of hell when he beheld his daughter a prisoner.

The cabin was like an oven and the sting of powder-smoke made our eyes water. Outside the birds were fluttering about their daily tasks. High among the fleecy cloud-bundles were dark specks which we knew to be turkey-buzzards, already attracted by the dead. For some time the only sign of the enemy's presence was when three horses galloped down the valley, running from the savages in

the edge of the woods. As the animals drew near the cabins and showed an inclination to visit the lick-block a volley from the Indians sent one down. The other two dashed madly toward the Bluestone.

Cousin studied the ridge back of the cabin and failed to discover any suggestion of the hidden foe.

"Which ain't no token they ain't there," he muttered.

"If they hadn't scared the horses we could have caught a couple!" I lamented.

"We'd been shot off their backs afore we'd gone two rods," assured my companion. "Let me show you."

With that he took a big gourd from the corner and painted a face on it with a piece of charcoal found in the fireplace. To a few small wooden pegs stuck in the top he made fast some long strings of tow, shredded out to resemble hair. Then he placed my hat on top of the gourd and the effect was most grotesque. Yet from a distance it easily would be mistaken for a human face.

It was a vast improvement on the old trick of hoisting a hat on a stick. His next maneuver was to enlarge one of the holes I had made in the roof. When he thrust his hands through the hole, as if about to draw himself up, he focused every savage eye on the back of the cabin roof. Through the opening he slowly pushed the gourd, topped by the hat and having long hair hanging down the sides.

The decoy was barely in place before he was on the floor while a volley of lead and a flight of arrows rained against the roof.

"I 'low that they're still there," he said.

"They'll wait till dark and then rush us."

"They'll use fire-arrers first," he corrected. "The Hoof has a poor stomick for losin' more warriors. He'll need lots o' sculps an' prisoners to make up for the men he's lost. He'll take no more chances. When it gits dark they'll start a blaze on the roof. They'll creep mighty close without our seein' 'em. The minute we show ourselves they'll be ready to jump us. The chief is reckonin' to take us alive. The towns on the Scioto will need more'n one stake-fire to make 'em forgit what this trip to Virginia has cost 'em."

The business of waiting was most dreary. There was no water in the cabin, and the sweat from our hands would spoil a priming unless care was taken. At the end of this misery was almost certain captivity, ended by torture. Cousin had the same thought for he spoke up and said:

"I'll live s'long's there's any show to even up the score, but I ain't goin' to be kept alive no three days over a slow fire just to make some fun for them damn beggars."

I watched the bar of sunlight slowly move over the rough puncheon floor. The time passed infernally slowly for men waiting to test a hopeless haz-

ard. By all logic the minutes should have been very precious and should have fairly flashed into eternity. The best we could reasonably wish for was death in combat, or self-inflicted. Yet we cursed the heat, the buzzing flies, the choking fumes of powder, the lack of water, and wished the time away.

I wanted to open the door a bit for a breath of outside air. Cousin objected, saying:

"We could do it, an' there ain't no Injuns near 'nough to play us any tricks. But they'd see the door was open, even if only a crack, and they'd know we was gittin' desperate, or sufferin' a heap, an' that would tickle 'em. I'm ag'in' givin' 'em even that bit of enjoyment. If we can make a break when it gits dark afore the fire-arrers begin lightin' things up we'll try for the Bluestone. If we could git clear o' this damn bottle we'd stand a chance o' makin' our hosses."

I glanced down at the floor, and my heart tightened a bit. The bar of sunlight had vanished.

"We've just 'bout come to it," gravely remarked Cousin. "I ain't no talkin' cuss, but I'll say right here that I sorter like you, Morris. If things could 'a' been different, an' I could be more like other folks, I 'low we'd been good friends."

"We're the best of friends, Shelby. As long as I can think I shall remember how you came with me into this trap to help rescue the girl."

"Shucks! Don't be a fool!" he growled. "That

ain't nothin'. Once I bu'sted up a Mingo camp to git my dawg. They'd caught the critter an' was cal'latin' to sculp him alive. Got him free, too, an' the damn pup was that stirred up by his feelin's that he couldn't tell who was his friends, an' he chawed my thumb somethin' cruel."

He stepped to the loophole, and after peering out mumbled:

"Changin' mighty smart."

I glanced out and the ridges were losing their outlines and the valley was becoming blurred. Cousin mused.

"It'll be comin' right smart now. Don't overlook anything."

We made a last examination of flints and primings, and Cousin softly arranged the heavy door bar so it might be displaced with a single movement. He startled me by abruptly standing erect and cocking his head to one side and remaining motionless.

"The old Englishman!" he exclaimed. "He ain't fired a shot, or tried to talk with us for a long time."

I went to the front end of the cabin and put my eye to the peephole. The small window showed black. I called to him several times and received no answer. There was only one conclusion. A chance ball through a loophole or a window had killed the old fellow. Cousin agreed to this. A signal at the mouth of the valley brought us to our

toes. It was about to begin. The signal was answered from the ridge behind us.

"They've put the stopper in the bottle," Cousin whispered. "But here's an idea. The upper cabin, where the Dales was, is empty. If we could sneak in there without bein' seen we'd have the slimmest sort of a chance to duck back to the ridge while they was shootin' their fire-arrers at this cabin. There would be a few minutes, when the first flames begin showin', when every eye would be on this place. If we could only reach the flank o' the ridge we'd be fools if we couldn't dodge 'em."

This appealed to me as being excellent strategy. Knowing the Dales' cabin was empty, the Indians would not think of paying it much attention at first. To leave our shelter and make the short distance would require darkness. Our greatest danger would be from the Indians on the ridge back of us. By this time they were lined up at the foot of the slope and were all ready to break from cover.

In our favor was the Granville cabin, which would shelter us from the ridge for a bit of the perilous way. Already it was possible, I decided, to crawl the distance without being detected by the enemy across the valley. Cousin refused to run the risk, and argued.

"Every minute gained now gives us that much more of a chance. The Injuns out front ain't all across the valley any more. They begun creepin'

into the clearin' the minute it begun growin' dark. Reckon it's time they l'arned who's cooped up in here, so's they won't git too bold."

He removed the bar of the door and through the crevice sounded his terrible war-cry, the scream of a panther. It stabbed the dusk with ear-splitting intensity.

"There! They'll stop an' count a dozen afore gittin' too close," he muttered as he softly replaced the bar. "They'll lay mighty low an' won't bother to do much but watch the door. I 'low it'll be hard work to crawl out without they guessin' somethin's wrong."

"Then let's rip up the floor and dig a hole under the logs," I suggested.

"We'll do that," he quietly agreed.

As cautiously as possible we removed several of the puncheon slabs next to the wall. The base logs were huge fellows and held the floor several feet from the ground. To excavate a hole under either of the four would have required more time than we believed we had to spare. Our plan threatened to be hopeless until Cousin explored the length of the log with his fingers and gave a little cry of delight. He found a hole already dug near the front end of the cabin. It had been the work of the dog. Working with our hunting-knives we loosened the dirt and pawed it behind us and made it larger. At last Cousin pressed me back and ducked his head and

shoulders into the hole. Then he drew back and whispered:

"I can git my head an' shoulders through. 'Low I could squirm out o' hell if I could git my shoulders through. I'll go ahead an' you pass out the rifles. Ready?"

I pressed his hand. There followed a few moments of waiting, then a handful of dirt fell into the hole and informed me my companion had squeezed clear of the log and that the ultimate test was to be faced. I passed the rifles, butts first, and felt them gently removed from my grasp. Working noiselessly as possible I soon squirmed out into the refreshing evening air and lay motionless. Cousin was ahead and already worming his way toward the third cabin. My outstretched hand touched the butt of my rifle, and I began creeping after my friend.

I nearly suffocated in crawling by the opening between our cabin and the Granville cabin, for I scarcely ventured to breathe. It seemed as if any one within pistol-shot of me must hear the pounding of my heart. The silence continued, and at last I was hugging the ground at the end of the cabin and for the time sheltered from spying eyes at the foot of the ridge.

A quavering cry rang out at the mouth of the valley. This time it was answered from the clearing on our right as well as from the ridge. The

Indians had crept closer, just as Cousin had predicted.

Half a minute passed, then the signal sounded directly ahead of us, or from beyond the Dales' cabin. The circle was completed. From the ridge soared a burning arrow. It fell short, landing behind the cabin we had vacated. As it gave off no light I surmised it went out on striking the ground.

Cousin drew away from the end of the Granville cabin and was risking the second and last gap. I hurried a bit, fearing more arrows. As I came abreast of the door I wondered what had become of the Englishman. Either the night was playing a trick, or else the door was partly open. I reached out my hand to learn the truth, and touched a cold hand hanging limply over the threshold.

My nerves jumped, but I mastered them by reasoning that the Englishman had been shot by a chance ball and had attempted to leave the cabin, thinking to gain our shelter and to die there. Death had overtaken him as he was opening the door. That it was the Englishman's hand I had touched was evidenced by the shirt-sleeve, puckered in at the wrist.

I released the poor hand and was resuming my way when a slight sound caused me to hold my breath. Then a heavy weight landed on my back, knocking the breath from my lungs with an explosive grunt. Next, the night was ripped from horizon to horizon with a jagged streak of red.

CHAPTER IX

DALE ESCAPES

WHEN I recovered my senses I was being dragged over the ground by means of a cord around my chest and under my arms. My wrists were lashed together and my ankles were likewise secured. The first thing my eyes beheld were the red loopholes and window of the lower cabin, and the flames crawling through the two holes I had made in the roof.

My capture had revealed our desertion of the cabin, and the Indians had lost no time in entering and firing it. Smoke and flames were pouring from the end window of the Granville cabin also. As the red tongues licked across the top of the doorway they threw into relief the arm and hand of the old Englishman still hanging over the threshold.

My head felt as though it was cracked wide open and it throbbed most sickeningly. I managed to lift it a bit to escape further bruises as my captor roughly hauled me to the forest. The third cabin, the one occupied by the Dales, burst into flames as I was being yanked into the first fringe of bushes.

The valley was now brightly lighted, and my last view of it included the lick-block. One phase of a successful Indian raid was missing; there were no warriors madly dancing about the burning homes. Far up the ridge rang out the infuriated cry of a panther, and I knew it was fear of young Cousin's deadly rifle that was keeping the savages under cover.

"Let me stand up and walk," I said in Shawnee.

"Alive are you?" growled a white man's voice in English.

"You'll be John Ward," I said as some one lifted me to my feet.

"I am Red Arrow, a Shawnee. And don't you forget it."

"Where are the Dales?" I asked.

"Keep your mouth shut!" he ordered.

They untied my hands only to fasten them behind me. They shifted the waist-cord to my neck, and then released my feet. Some one walked ahead, pulling on the cord, and I followed as best I could to escape being strangled. On each side of me walked a warrior, invisible except as when we crossed a glade where the starlight filtered down. Ward walked behind me, and warned:

"Any tricks and you'll get my ax."

"You were in the cabin with the dead Englishman?"

He chuckled softly and boasted:

"I killed him. When you two were fighting fire I got my chance to steal down to the Dale cabin. Then it was easy to make the Granville cabin. The old fool thought I was one of you when he heard my voice, and drew the bar. I was inside and had his life before he knew he had made a mistake. I waited. Then you crawled along. Curse that damned young devil who yells like a panther! He was the one I wanted. I'd give a thousand of such as you to get his hair! But he got by the door without my hearing him. A little more, and you'd have passed, too."

There was much crashing and running through the bushes behind us, and occasionally I could make out dark shapes hurrying by. These were the warriors who had fired the cabins, and now they were in haste to leave the spot. Owing to their fear of Cousin they dared not leave the valley except as they did so under cover. We made good time through the woods, however, although more than once my gasping cry warned Ward, or one of the savages at my side, that I was being choked to death.

As a premature demise was not on their program the cord was quickly loosened each time, and the man ahead warned to be more careful. These partial strangulations resulted from the fellow's anxiety to escape from the neighborhood of the double-barrel rifle. On reaching the Bluestone we halted while the savages collected their horses. From the

few words exchanged I estimated that half the band was mounted. Without building a fire or eating we started up the Bluestone. Neither Black Hoof nor the Dales were with our party when we halted at daybreak. We paused only long enough to bolt some half-cooked deer-meat. I asked for the trader and his daughter, and Ward laughed and shook before my face the scalps he had taken in the Granville cabin. Two of them were pitiably small.

"You scalp other men's kills," I observed.

"You'll not say that when I scalp you."

"What does Dale now think of his Indian friends?"

This seemed to amuse him tremendously, and he laughed like a white man.

"He doesn't seem to know what has happened," he finally replied with much relish. "He stares at us, then at the girl, as if trying to understand."

"What about the girl?"

"That's enough. Keep still," he warned, and made a threatening gesture with his ax.

My hands, which had been released long enough for me to eat, were trussed up again. My rough usage and the travel had worn on me, but I had no desire to rest so long as Patricia Dale was to be found. My captors also had a definite plan—one that demanded haste. By daylight I perceived by the signs that the greater number of the band had gone ahead, probably under the lead of Black Hoof.

Unless the Dales had been butchered in the woods they must be with the chief; and I could not believe they were dead. They would be too valuable as hostages should the settlers gather in force to block the Shawnees' return to the Ohio. Those of the Indians who had horses, with the exception of two, rode off. One of the mounted men to remain was Ward, who came behind me. The other was the Indian holding the cord.

It was plain that every savage in the band was eager to advance with all possible haste, nor was it fear of Cousin that was now driving them. Finally my aching head understood it all; the Howard's Creek settlement was to be attacked and the savages afoot were afraid they would arrive too late to participate.

On our left rose the wall of Great Flat Top Mountain, a short chain, in reality a continuation of Tug Ridge. On the right rose ridge after ridge of the Alleghanies, punctuated by Peter's Mountain, where New River burst through the wall in its quest for the Ohio. A wild land, and yet birds, bees and deer were here, and the soil was ripe for happy homes.

I managed to keep up until after midday, when my legs suddenly refused to carry me farther. I told Ward to tomahawk me if he wished, but that I must rest before moving another step. There was no question as to his inclination, for his brown hand fondled his ax most longingly. He dismounted and

boosted me on to his horse. The rest of the day was covered with me riding first Ward's and then the savage's animal.

We camped at dusk that night, and I was too exhausted to swallow more than a few mouthfuls of food before falling asleep. Before sunrise we were up and hurrying through the gray mists and reversing the route Cousin and I had followed on traveling to the valley. I recognized several of the camps where the Dales and Ward had halted when the brute was leading them into the death-trap.

"You nearly got me by dropping the girl's moccasin in the mountains," I informed him.

The abruptness of the accusation took him off his guard. With a wide grin he said:

"Stole it from her just before we entered the settlement. Saw Hughes striking into the hills and planned to catch him. But he got too far ahead for me to ride around him. Dogged him until he met you, then rode back and laid my trap. Hughes was the man I was after. His hair would count for a dozen scalps like yours."

"But you didn't care to try a shot unless it could be from behind and sure to kill," I taunted.

"You'll pay a high price for that," he quietly assured me. "The chief says you are to be brought in alive. We will soon see how brave you are with the girl looking on. Men should be very brave men when their squaws are watching."

I was afoot and walking at his side. I lowered my head and tried to butt him from the saddle. He kicked me in the chest and the warrior yanked on the cord and threw me down on my face and all but strangled me. After that Ward and I had no more words. He rode either ahead, or some distance behind, leaving one of the Indians to walk at my heels. I have no doubt he did this to avoid any temptation to brain me. I lost track of time, for we traveled far into the night when the footing was good. We snatched a few hours' sleep when absolutely necessary and fed indifferently. When I could walk no farther I was placed on one of the two horses. I hoped that Cousin in escaping from Abb's Valley had taken our horses with him; and I prayed he would reach Howard's Creek ahead of Black Hoof.

At last we came to the outskirts of an Indian camp, which I estimated to be within less than half a mile of the creek settlement. A dozen warriors swarmed forward to greet us, welcoming me with exaggerated courtesy. While they were thus mocking me Black Hoof appeared, moving with great dignity, and dispersing my tormentors with a gesture.

I was led into the camp and my cord made fast to a tree. There was no air of triumph about the place. A warrior reclining on a pile of boughs and nursing a shattered shoulder suggested a futile at-

tack on the cabins. I glanced about for a display of fresh scalps and rejoiced at beholding none.

The Indians stared at me malevolently, but offered me no abuse. Ward proudly flourished the hair he had retrieved from the Granville cabin, and the trophies were soon fastened to a tall pole and paraded around the camp, after which demonstration the pole was stuck upright in the ground.

It required a second examination of the place to locate Dale. Like myself he was tied to a tree with sufficient length of cord to permit him to lie down. His face was heavy with unspeakable horror. When he met my gaze he did not seem to recognize me at first. Then he muttered:

"You, too!"

My heart ached when I failed to discover any trace of Patricia. Before I could question the trader, Ward yanked me to my feet and turned me about, and I found myself looking into the eyes of Black Hoof.

"The young man made a very brave fight," he said.

"It is sad to know a skunk and not a Shawnee warrior captured me," I replied.

Ward glared murder at me. Black Hoof gave him a warning glance, and informed me:

"Red Arrow is a Shawnee warrior. Very brave. Very cunning. He will help us take the cabins on the creek."

"You have tried once?" I asked, glancing at the man with the broken shoulder.

The chief's brows contracted.

"Some of my young men were very foolish," he replied. "When Catahecassa tries, the first time will be the last."

From the direction of the settlement came the scream of a panther, and at the sound the camp seemed to stir uneasily. With a fiery glance at the warriors Black Hoof gave an order, and a score of men glided into the forest. To me he quietly said:

"There was a panther's whelp in the little valley we did not get. The Shawnees would dance his scalp ahead of all the hair growing in any of these valleys. He rode to the settlement ahead of me. But we shall get them now. We shall get him. Then we will see if his war-cry is strong when he feels fire."

"Where is the white woman? Did you kill her?" I asked, and I had to fight myself to keep my voice from shaking.

Without deigning to answer he turned and walked over to Dale. At almost the same moment Patricia and Shelby Cousin's sister entered the camp. Patricia walked ahead, the Cousin girl a few feet behind her. I forgot the cord and eagerly started to join her.

Ward snarled like an animal and jerked on the

cord and pulled me violently back. Patricia glanced in our direction, and I saw her hand fly to her heart as she stared at me with lips parted. Black Hoof noticed this bit of drama, and wheeling about, he harshly commanded:

"Let Red Arrow remember I am chief. If the white man would talk to the white woman do not stop him. See that his hands are well tied and put hobbles on his legs."

"If I had my way with you!" hissed Ward.

An Indian slipped the cord from the tree and with it trailing behind me I hurried to the girl. She dropped on a log, her face a white mask of terror. Cousin's sister remained a few paces behind her. Her face was expressionless, but she did not remove her gaze from Patricia. Perhaps Patsy was the first white woman she had seen whose freshness suggested her own youth. Recognizing my desire to talk with the prisoner she withdrew, keeping in sight but out of hearing.

"At least they have not tied you," I said.

"I go and come as I will," was the listless answer.

"With the woman to watch you?"

"Not if I want to be alone."

"You mean you are free to go and come unwatched?" I demanded.

She nodded her head.

"Then why haven't you tried to make the settlement? It is near. Listen. Shelby Cousin is here.

The Indians can't afford the time it will take to capture the place. Walk along into the woods. Go due east. By God's grace I believe you can make it!"

"Basdel, you forget," she sorrowfully reproached. "You forget my father is here. That is why they give me my freedom."

"He would rejoice and thank God if you would do as I say."

"But the Indian woman with the blue eyes has told me in English that if I run away they will hurt him terribly."

Poor child! As if her presence could save Ericus Dale from dying the death once Black Hoof found time to indulge in his favorite pastime. I vehemently begged her to flee, promising all sorts of absurd things if she would but do so, even to assuring her I would effect her father's release.

She slowly shook her head, tempted not the least by my pleas.

"Even the Indians know me better than that. And to think we trusted them! Oh, Basdel, it doesn't seem possible! You were right. Father was wrong. God help him! And now they have taken you!"

"All will be well yet," I faltered.

"Yes, all will be well," she gently said. "All will be well, when we are dead and at peace."

"Patsy! Patsy!" I begged. "Don't give up

hope. Don't lose your courage! Why, there's a dozen chances for us to fool these devils."

She patted my tied hands, and murmured:

"You're a good boy, Basdel. You were patient when I abused you. You told me the truth. I am out of place out here. If I were a pioneer woman I could help you plan to escape, but I am only a silly fool from over the mountains. I am absolutely helpless. But you've been good to me, Basdel. You followed me into that horrible valley. You were caught because you tried to help us. Oh, the shame of it! The hideous cruelty of it! That you were caught—Basdel, I pray my last thought will be about your goodness to me. Just that."

She was at the limit of her endurance and I backed away and Cousin's sister glided forward. I flogged my mind for a scheme of escape which would include her; her father, if possible. But it was as she had said; she was no pioneer woman, resourceful and daring. The Shawnees saw her helplessness, else they never would have allowed her the freedom of the camp and surrounding woods.

They knew she would never leave her father, and that she lacked the border woman's daring initiative so necessary in any attempt to free him. As I was casting about for some plan to save her Black Hoof glided to my side and took me by the arm and led me toward the tree where Dale was lying.

This closer inspection of the trader revealed how

fearfully he had suffered in his mind. The flesh of his strong face hung in folds as if his skin had suddenly become many sizes too large for him. His eyes had retreated deeper into the sockets, and his thick lips, once so firm and domineering, were loose and flabby. Black Hoof stirred him contemptuously with his foot. Dale dragged himself to a sitting posture and began shivering as if suffering from ague.

"Oh, my God, Morris!" he groaned.

"The Pack-Horse-Man can save his life," sententiously began Black Hoof.

"My daughter?" gasped Dale, rising on his knees.

"He shall save his daughter's life," added the chief.

Dale moistened his lips and tried to recover some of his old spirit.

"Never mind, Morris. Give me a little time. I'll get us all out of this fix. They're angry now. When they've had time to think they'll be reasonable. If they kill me, they'll kill their trade with the whites." It was the first time I ever heard him pronounce the word without stressing it.

Black Hoof glowered at the miserable man ferociously and said:

"You will go to the edge of the clearing with my warriors. You will speak to the settlers and tell them they shall save their lives if they put down their guns. After they put down their guns you and your daughter shall go free."

The picture of Abb's Valley and the result of his trusting in the Shawnees' promises must have flashed across the unhappy man's mind. He sank, feebly moaning:

"No, no! Not that! The blood of the Granvilles —the little children—is on me. Kill me, but I'll lead no more into your trap."

These were brave words even if brokenly voiced. But Black Hoof heard with grim amusement in his small black eyes.

"You weak-hearted dog!" he hissed. "So you tell Catahecassa what he will and what he will not, do. Ho! You fat white man who always planned to cheat the Indians in a trade. You fill your ears against Catahecassa's words? Ho! Then you are a brave man. The Shawnees have been blind not to see your brave heart. Now, white trader, hear my talk. You will do as Catahecassa says, or you will be tied to a tree and your daughter shall be put to the torture before your eyes."

With a terrible cry Dale fell over on his side and remained unconscious. There was a second shriek, and the girl was pushing Black Hoof aside as she hastened to kneel by her father. The chief darted a glance of admiration at her for her display of courage. The girl was blind to our presence as she fondled and petted the stricken man until he opened his eyes. Black Hoof was pleased to have her there as a means of breaking down the trader's

will. Leaning over her shoulder to stare down into the terrified eyes of his victim the chief warned:

"Unless the settlers give themselves up it shall be as I have said. It must be before the sun goes down. Tell her all I have said."

With that he dragged me back to my tree. For a few minutes the chief's horrible threat dulled my mind to the point of stupidity. He waited for me to collect my thoughts. At last I managed to ask:

"What you said back there was a trick of course? You would never torture the daughter of the Pack-Horse-Man?"

"Unless he does as told she must die," he calmly assured me. "She will die soon anyway. She is not strong enough to live our life, like the blue-eyed squaw over there." And he glanced toward Cousin's sister. "Her children would be neither red nor white. They would have squaw-hearts. If the trader does not speak words that will bring the settlers from their cabins with empty hands she shall be tortured until he does speak."

I do not remember falling, yet I found myself on the ground, and Black Hoof had departed. In his place stood Ward, staring at me curiously.

"You went down as if hit with an ax," he grunted.

"My legs are weak from hard travel and poor food," I said.

Patricia Dale passed quite close to us, a gourd of

water in her hands. She was carrying it to her father. Ward exclaimed in English:

"What a woman!'

His brawny figure seemed to dilate and he made a queer hissing noise as he looked after her. Turning to me he hoarsely said:

"I was born white. It's her blood that calls me. When I saw her in Salem I said I would have her for my squaw if I could get her and her fool of a father into the mountains."

My mental paralysis lifted.

"Is she promised to you?" I asked.

"I am to have any two prisoners to do with as I like," he answered. "Catahecassa said that when I started to enter the villages beyond the mountains to get news. There was little chance of bringing any whites back, but if I did I was to have two of them."

"Then you had better remind your chief of his promise," I warned. "He says he will torture the girl before her father's eyes if the father does not help in betraying the settlers."

"Ugh! I have his promise. He dare not break it."

The girl would kill herself before submitting to Ward's savage caresses. She would go mad if forced to witness the torture of her father. I had seized upon Ward's passion as a means of gaining a bit more time. If he could successfully claim the

girl then she must be rescued from him. But viewed from any angle I could find nothing but horrors.

Release by death would be very kind. If any harm were suffered by the girl I should lose my reason; my life, if God were merciful. No longer did our time of grace extend to the Scioto villages. At any moment our little destinies might come to a fearful ending. In my soul I railed at the curse of it. Such a little way to go, and so much pain and sorrow.

Ward left me and strode up to the chief. They talked rapidly, and I could read from Ward's mien that he was very angry. When he returned to me he was in a rare rage.

"Catahecassa dodges by saying you and the trader are the two prisoners I must take. He says he will burn the girl unless the trader makes the talk as told. If I can find a way of capturing the settlers the girl will be given to me in place of either you or her father."

"I don't want to be your prisoner," I said.

"I do not believe you do," he agreed. "But I would take you if I did not need the trader. If the girl refuses to become my squaw then I will build a little fire on Dale's back. That will make her accept my belts."

He left me with that thought in my mind. On the one hand the girl was to be utilized in forcing

Dale to betray the settlement. On the other, the trader was to be used to make the girl submit to the renegade. I could not imagine a more horrible situation. I was still wallowing deep in my hell when the camp became very active. Dale was lifted to his feet and his cords were removed.

The time had come for Black Hoof to try him as a decoy. There remained a good hour of light. Patricia, not understanding, yet fearing the worst, hovered about her father, her eyes wildly staring and her whole appearance denoting a weakening of her reason. As they started to lead her father into the woods she attempted to follow him, and Black Hoof pushed her back. Cousin's sister spoke up, saying:

"I will keep her."

The warriors disappeared in the direction of the settlement. The two women left the camp on the opposite side. Ward went along with the Indians, and I knew this was my golden opportunity to escape. Before I could make a beginning at freeing my hands a noose fell over my head and clutched at my throat. The guards were taking no chances.

Great mental anguish is accompanied by no clarity of thought and graves no connected memories on the mind. I know I suffered, but there are only fragments of recollections covering that black period of waiting.

I have a clear picture of the warrior holding the

end of the cord calling for some one to bring a gourd of water. I do not remember drinking, but as later I found the front of my shirt soaked I assume the water was for me. Coherent memory resumes with the noise the warriors made in returning to the camp. I shall never forget their appearance as they emerged from the undergrowth. Black Hoof walked ahead. Close behind him came two warriors dragging Dale.

I was amazed to behold Patricia in the procession. She was leaning on Lost Sister's arm, and there was a lump on her forehead as though she had been struck most brutally. Then came the warriors and Ward. Dale was roughly thrown to the ground. Several men began trimming the branches from a stout sapling. Others became busy searching the fallen timber for dry wood.

Ward walked over to me and kicked me in the side. I must have groaned aloud, for he commanded:

"Shut up! I'm ripe for a killing."

Matters had gone against his liking. He played with his ax nervously, his baleful gaze darting about the camp. I waited and at last his race heritage compelled him to talk, and he commenced:

"The old man was scared into doing what the chief told him to do. He would not at first, and the men were sent to bring the girl along. When he faced her he made a noise like a sheep bleating.

Then he ran to the clearing and began his talk. The girl heard his words. She broke away and ran into sight of the cabins and screamed for them not to listen, that it was a trap. Black Hoof struck her with the flat of his ax. Now he swears he'll roast the fool."

"She is your prisoner!" I cried.

"He says she must burn."

"There must be some way, something you can do!" I wildly insisted, my only thought being to spare her the immediate danger.

"I want her for my squaw bad enough to get her if I can," he growled. "But if I'm to think of any plan I must be quick. They've got the stake nearly ready."

He walked to where the warriors were collecting small fuel from between the fallen trees. One of them hauled a hollow maple log out of the débris and threw it to one side as being too heavy for a quick fire. Ward halted and rested a foot on it and bowed his head. Next he began tapping it with his tomahawk. His actions attracted the attention of the men, and Black Hoof asked:

"What does Red Arrow think is in the log? A snake?"

Ward startled the savages, and also me, by curtly replying:

"He sees a white man's cannon in the log. The fort holds all the settlers on the creek. Its walls are

stout. If they can be broken down the Shawnees will take many scalps and prisoners. It will be an easy victory. Black Hoof's name will be repeated far beyond Kaskaskia and the Great Lakes in the North. He will be given many new war-names."

Black Hoof's eyes glittered as he pictured the glory and prestige the hollow log might confer upon him. He examined the log carefully and perceived only that it was hollow.

"Have you medicine to make it into a cannon?" he asked.

"I have big medicine. Before it will work for me I must be given the white squaw. There must be no taking back of the gift. If the medicine-cannon does not give the settlers into our hands still the white squaw must be mine to do with as I will."

Black Hoof took some minutes to ponder over this proposition. He could only see a hollow log. Ward's intellect permitted him to see greater possibilities. While he waited for the chief to make a decision he examined the maple more thoroughly, and smiled quietly.

Black Hoof at last said:

"Catahecassa gives the white woman to the Red Arrow. Tell your medicine to make the big gun shoot."

Ward was exultant. To the wondering savages he explained:

"It must be bound tight with much rawhide.

Small stones must be packed tight in the butt-end. I will make a hole for the priming. Then we will draw it to the clearing and load it with powder and rocks."

This simple expedient, superior to the best plans of the Indians, was greeted with yells of triumph. The chief said:

"Red Arrow is a medicine-man."

The wooden tube was reinforced under Ward's directions. This done, the savages danced and whooped about the grotesque cannon for some minutes. Ward stood with folded arms, his gaze gloating as it rested on the girl, and haughty with pride as he observed Black Hoof's respectful bearing. Coming back to me he said:

"You wanted that woman. You will die among the Shawnees. You showed you wanted her when you followed her into that valley. Her father spoke of you and by his words I knew you wanted her. Now I have her."

The girl came forward, attracted by Ward's speech to me, although she could understand none of it. She drew aside in passing the renegade and dropped on her knees at my side.

"What do they plan? What will they do with me?" her dry lips demanded.

Ward, enraged by her show of aversion, seized her by the shoulder, ripping the cloth, and dragged her to her feet, and informed her:

"Catahecassa ordered his men to burn you. I made him give you to me. You are my woman. You are lucky I am not a red man."

"No! No! I'll burn, you monster! I'll burn a hundred times," she panted. And she struck her hand into his face, whereat the savages shouted in merriment.

I believed he would kill her then and there, for he groaned aloud from rage and raised his ax over his head.

"Strike me!" she begged, facing the uplifted ax unflinchingly; and although not of the border she displayed the fine courage of the Widow McCabe and other frontier women.

With a whimpering, bestial note Ward managed to say:

"No! You shall live, and many times beg me to kill you. But you shall still live till I trade you to some red hunter."

"I will kill myself some way before you can harm me!" she defied.

Ward slowly lowered his ax and began chuckling. He told her, pointing to me:

"This man. He loved you. He was a fool. I say *was* because his life is behind him. It is something that is finished, a trace followed to the end. He is a dead man as he lies there. He loved you. I believe you loved him. He is my prisoner. Now you can guess why I know you will not harm yourself."

I knew. She was suffering too much to reason clearly. But he was eager to help her to understand. He amplified by explaining:

"It will be for you to say if he is to be tortured. He is young and strong. We could keep him alive many days after the fire began to burn him. It will be a fine game to see whom you love the better, yourself or him. You will be free to go about the camp. But this man will be watched all the time. After we take the fort to-night you will come to me and ask to be my woman.

"I had planned to take your father for my second prisoner. My medicine tells me to take this man as he will live longer. Remember; you will ask to be my squaw. That sapling was trimmed for you; it will do for this man. You will come to me, or he goes to the stake. Now, go!"

And he reached out his hand and sent her spinning and reeling toward her father.

"You dog! Set me free, empty-handed, and you take a knife and ax, and I will show the Shawnees what a poor dog you are," I told him in Shawnee.

But he was not to be tempted into any violence just now. He mocked:

"You are something to be watched and guarded. When my new wife is ugly to me I will order you to the fire. Then she will be kind and you will be kept alive. Some time you will go to the fire. When I get tired of her and wish a new wife."

Patricia crawled to her father and laid her head on his breast. No one gave her any heed except as the Cousin girl walked by her several times, watching her with inscrutable eyes. The Shawnees were impatient to try their new cannon.

At Ward's suggestion Black Hoof sent some of his warriors to make a feint on the east side of the fort, so that the cannon could be hurried forward and mounted across a log while the garrison's attention was distracted. It was now dusk in the woods although the birds circling high above the glade caught the sunlight on their wings. The clearing would now be in the first twilight shadows, and Black Hoof gave his final orders.

Acting on Ward's command two warriors fell upon me and fastened cords to my wrists and ankles and staked me out in spread-eagle style, and then sat beside me, one on each side. Half a dozen of the older men remained in the camp. Dale was mumbling something to the girl and she rose as if at his bidding.

The Cousin girl glided forward and in English asked what she wanted. It was Dale who told her, asking for water in Shawnee. She motioned for Patricia to remain where she was and in a few minutes brought water in a gourd, and some venison. Patricia drank but would eat nothing.

The Cousin woman tried to feed Dale, and succeeded but poorly. I asked for food and water, and

one of them brought a gourd and some meat. They lifted my head so I might drink and fed me strips of smoked meat, but they would not release my hands.

After a time we heard much shouting and the firing of many guns. This would be the mock attack, I judged. It increased in volume, this firing, until I feared that what had been started as a feint was being pushed forward to a victory.

Suddenly the firing dropped away and only the yelling continued. This would mean the savages had succeeded in rushing their wooden cannon close enough to do damage.

Every Indian left in the camp, including my two guards, were now standing listening eagerly for the voice of the cannon. It came, a loud explosion that dwarfed all rifle-fire any of us had ever heard. With screams of joy the guard began dancing about me and the older men danced around the Dales. They went through all the grotesque attitudes and steps which they use in their pantomimes of great victories.

This savage play was quickly stilled, however, as groans of pain and shouts of furious anger came to us. Now the cheering was that of white voices only. There was the noise of many feet hurrying back to the camp. Black Hoof came through the bushes first, and only the dusk saved my head from being split, as with a howl he threw his ax at me. Then

came Ward, staggering like a drunken man and clawing at his left shoulder.

The full force of the catastrophe was revealed when four broken forms of dead warriors were hurried into the little opening, followed by a dozen braves bearing wounds, which would appall a town-dweller. Ward's medicine had lied to them. The cannon had burst and had scattered its charge of stones among the Shawnees. One of the corpses had been beheaded by a piece of rock.

Several warriors rushed toward the Dales; others ran to me.

"Stop!" roared Black Hoof. "Do not touch the prisoners!"

Some one lighted a fire. Other fires sprang up until the glade was well illumined. Black Hoof sent some of the younger men to scout the creek so the camp might not be surprised by a sally. To the warriors remaining the chief announced:

"We must march for the Ohio. Bad medicine has dogged us for many sleeps. I will make a feast to my medicine and will tell you what it says shall be done with the prisoners."

"That man and that woman are my prisoners!" hoarsely cried Ward.

"They were your prisoners while we believed your medicine was strong. Now that we know your medicine is weak and foolish they belong to all the Shawnees. Red Arrow's medicine is bad at heart.

It told him to make a big gun. Four of my warriors are dead. Many are hurt. It will take blood to cover the bodies of the dead. Red Arrow has no prisoners until he goes and catches them."

Ward pulled his ax and limped toward me. No warrior made an effort to stop him. But Black Hoof reminded:

"When the Red Arrow is no longer a Shawnee he will be tied and left at the edge of the settlement. The prisoners are not to be harmed until my medicine directs."

Ward halted. He was close enough for me to see that while he had escaped a wound from the flying stones his shoulder was blown full of powder. The sweat streamed down his face and intimated something of the agony he was suffering.

"Black Hoof is a great warrior and a mighty chief!" he said huskily. "But Red Arrow's medicine is weak because it has not been fed. Only blood will make it strong. Let this man die before we break our camp." And he stirred me with his foot.

"The prisoners belong to the Shawnees. My medicine may whisper to kill one of them, but the warriors in sound of my voice must decide. Those who would see one of the three die show the ax."

Almost as soon as he had spoken the air was filled with spinning axes, ascending to the boughs and then falling to be deftly caught, each ax by its owner.

"It is good," said the chief. "My medicine shall pick the prisoners to die."

The explosion of the wooden cannon and the chief's ruling that we were no longer Ward's prisoners appealed to me as a reprieve. At least the girl was snatched from Ward's clutches. But the unanimous vote that one of us must die threw me back on the rack.

It was inconceivable that Patricia Dale should thus die. And yet I had had an earnest of the devil's ferocity. East of the mountains I could not have imagined a hand ever being raised against her. And I had seen her buffeted and struck down this day. Therefore, I did comprehend the inconceivable.

I called out to the chief:

"Catahecassa, listen to a white medicine, for the red medicine is far away or else is asleep. If the white woman is harmed you will shed tears of blood before you reach your Scioto towns. The settlers are swarming in to head you off. You have no time to spend in torturing any prisoner.

"But had you many sleeps of time it would be bad for you to harm the white girl. If you harm her you will have nothing to trade for an open path to the river. If you are wise in war, as your enemies say you are, you will guard her carefully at least until you make your villages above the Ohio."

The chief's eyes shifted uneasily, but his voice was ominous as he tersely advised:

"The white man had better ask his strong medicine to keep him from the fire. One of the prisoners shall roast this night. I have said it."

He had not liked my words as they set his superstitions to working, but it would never do for him to bow before the threats of a white medicine. So he remained inexorable in his determination to cover his dead with a white victim.

His raid into Virginia had been disastrous even though he could count the four Grisdols, the seven men, women and children in Abb's Valley in his death score. And he had taken three prisoners. Doubtless there were other victims at the fire I had seen when on the Cheat. But the price he had paid for these various kills and us three prisoners was too heavy.

Every Indian slain had been a prime fighting man, one it would take years of training to replace. After counting his losses in the mountains about the Grisdol clearing, the warriors killed in Abb's Valley, and now his losses here at Howard's Creek, the score was distinctly against him. No matter how mighty and famous a chief may be, he will surely and quickly lose his following if disaster dogs his war-paths.

So I could understand Black Hoof's mental attitude. He attributed his misfortunes to his weakening medicine. Let the cost be ever so dear he must strengthen that medicine; and he firmly believed a

human sacrifice would be the most acceptable offering he could make.

"Bring that man over to the fire," he directed, pointing to me.

My wrist-cords were loosed, my ankles were fastened only with a spancel, and strong hands jerked me to my feet. Taking short steps I advanced to where the girl lay with her head on her father's breast.

Black Hoof selected a charred stick from the fire and stood staring at us, his eyes blank as though he did not see us. His warriors watched him with much awe. His spirit was far away up in the mountains communing with his medicine. He was asking his *manito* which of the three victims would be most acceptable.

Ward stood behind him, his lean face working in helpless rage for fear the girl would be the choice, thereby costing him a new wife. I felt deathly sick, physically sick, fearing she was marked for death, fearing she was reserved for worse than death.

Suddenly Black Hoof began shivering, then threw back his head and for a moment stared about him as if to collect his scattered senses. Reaching down he pulled the girl from her father. She had swooned and was at least spared these few minutes of awful dread. The charred stick hovered over her white face, then was withdrawn and darted at mine.

Instinctively I closed my eyes, but as the stick failed to leave its mark I opened them and beheld Dale had been chosen: A black smooch extended from the tip of his nose to the roots of his hair, and was bisected by another mark across the bridge of his nose, and extending to his ears.

"Paint that man black," Black Hoof ordered.

Dale was very composed. He knew the worst. Perhaps he believed his death would save the girl. In a steady voice he said to me:

"Morris, I am sorry for you. Only God knows how I feel about Pat. I've been worse than a fool. Don't tell her when she wakes up. Get the Cousin woman to take her out of sight. It will be very hard but I will try to go through it like a man."

"If there is anything I could do!" I cried.

He shook his head and threw it back and his lips were drawn tight.

"I am to blame. It's best this way. You came after me to help me. That was good and foolish of you. Pray God she will be spared. Pray God you will be spared. They'll be satisfied with my death for a while. I think I shall go through it very well."

They pulled me away and fell to rubbing the unfortunate man's face and neck with charcoal. Cousin's sister with a magnificent show of strength gathered the unconscious girl in her arms and walked toward the woods. Ward would have

stopped her, but she hissed like a snake in his face, and there was a hardness in the blue eyes he could not withstand.

As she disappeared with her burden Black Hoof said something to Lost Sister's red husband. This warrior, very loath to miss the spectacle of a burning, sullenly glided after the woman. I feared he was sent to bring them back, but as they did not return I knew he was ordered to stand guard over them.

Now the opening was filled with the Shawnees, word having passed that Black Hoof was about to appease his war-medicine. Only the scouts and Lost Sister's man remained out. Dale was stood on his feet and his upper garments were torn off from him. As they offered to lead him to the stake he struck their hands aside and with firm step walked inside the circle of brush which had been heaped up some five feet from the stake.

I closed my eyes and endeavored not to witness the scene but was unable to keep them closed. With a spancel rope fastened to his ankles Dale was further secured by a long cord tied around one wrist and fastened some fifteen feet up the trimmed sapling.

When the flames began to bite on one side he could hobble around the post to the opposite side. As the flames spread he would become very active, but each revolution around the post would shorten

the slack of the wrist-cord. With the entire circle of fuel ablaze he would slowly roast. Black Hoof muttered some gibberish and applied the torch.

As the first billow of smoke rose and before the savages could commence their dancing and preliminary tortures, Ericus Dale threw back his head and loudly prayed:

"O God, protect my little girl! O God, have mercy upon me!"

Black Hoof jeered him, sardonically crying:

"The white man makes medicine to his white *manito*. Let Big Turtle* try him with a mouthful of fire. We will see if the white *manito* is weak or afraid to help his child."

A burly warrior scooped up coals on a piece of bark and with a fiendish grin leaped through the smoke. Two rifle shots, so close together as to be almost one, shattered the tense silence as the savages held their breath to enjoy every symptom of the excruciating agony. Dale went down on his knees, a small blue hole showing where the bullet mercifully had struck his heart. Big Turtle leaped backward and fell into the burning brush. A warrior, acting mechanically, dragged the Turtle clear of the flames. He was stone-dead.

For several moments the Indians were incapable of motion, so astounding was this interference with their sport. It was the scream of a panther that

*Also Daniel Boone's Shawnee name in later years.

awoke them to furious activity. Black Hoof shouted for his men to catch the white scout. Then he turned on me and raised his ax. The act was involuntary, for at once dropping his arm he ordered his men to extinguish the fire and to see I did not escape. Then he hurried into the forest.

The fire was stamped out and Dale's body removed to one side. I asked them to cover the dead man with a blanket, which they readily did. Now Lost Sister returned, this time leading Patricia. I called to her in Shawnee:

"Bring the white girl here. Does she know her father is dead?"

"I told her. The men said he was killed by a white bullet," was the sullen reply.

"Leave her with me and wash the black from his face," I said.

She brought her charge to me. Patricia's eyes were hot as if with fever. She dropped beside me and stared wildly. Then she began to remember and said:

"My father is dead, they tell me."

"He is dead. He suffered none. It is as he wished. He could not escape. He is at peace."

"Life is so terrible," she mumbled. "Death is so peaceful. Death is so beautiful. Then one is so safe."

She gave a little scream and collapsed with her head resting on my bound hands. But although her

slender frame shook convulsively she shed no tears.

I tried to talk to her as I would to a little child. After a while she rose and her composure frightened me. She walked to her father. Lost Sister had removed the telltale black. The girl kneeled and kissed him and patted his hair. Then returning to me, she quietly said:

"He looks very peaceful. Very happy. I am glad he did not have to suffer. The bullet that took his life was very kind. It must be very beautiful to be dead."

She ceased speaking and slowly began stretching her arms above her head, and with a long-drawn scream she fell over backward and I knew she had lost her reason.

CHAPTER X

OUR MEDICINE GROWS STRONGER

THE Shawnees' anxiety to start for the Ohio almost became a panic. The tragic manner in which they had been robbed of their victim, the screaming defiance of young Cousin, together with their losses in warriors, convinced them something was radically wrong with their war-medicine. Outwardly Black Hoof remained calm but I knew he was greatly worried. His medicine had designated Dale for the torture, and then had permitted a bullet to release the man.

Nor was it any small influence which the girl's condition exerted in this desire to retreat. She seemed to be stunned. She walked about, but without appearing to hear or see her captors. There was none of the savages who did not believe her terrible scream prefaced her crossing the dividing-line between reason and insanity.

As an insane person she was under the special protection of the great *manito,* and black woe to him who interfered with her. The chief was eager to abandon her to be picked up by the settlers at

Howard's Creek, but she clung tenaciously to Cousin's sister. The latter displayed no emotion over this preference, yet she did not repulse the girl. She even was gentle in caring for her.

Ward was for finishing me out of hand, but Black Hoof insisted I should carry packs and make myself useful before being dispensed with. Then again I would be something to display at the villages and something to dance about when it came to appeasing the ghosts of the slain warriors. We broke camp that night, and with malicious ingenuity Ward strapped packs on my shoulders until my back buckled. As he finished and was promising to thrust his knife into my legs if I displayed any weariness, Cousin's sister came up and sharply directed him to remove the packs as I was to serve as a litter-bearer.

"The white woman asks for him," she said. "Catahecassa gives him to me to help carry the medicine-woman."

Ward raged, but Black Hoof upheld the girl; and although I knew Patricia was too insensible of her surroundings to ask for any one, I was keen to serve her. Lost Sister had fashioned a rude litter out of rawhide and two saplings, slack between the poles so the girl could not roll out. To my surprise she stepped between the saplings at the forward end and called on me to pick up the other end and march. I considered it to be a man's work, but she made

nothing of it, and never called a halt that she might rest.

In the morning the hunters brought in some deer-meat and turkeys, and we camped long enough to eat. Once more Ward endeavored to prevail upon the chief to put me out of the way. He played upon Black Hoof's superstitions very cunningly by declaring the war-medicine would be very weak until I was killed. The chief was impressed, else he never would have come to stare at me.

It happened, however, that Patricia was delirious, and it was my hand on her head that seemed to quiet her. Lost Sister told a noble lie by volunteering the information that it was my presence that kept the girl quiet. Black Hoof and his braves had a great fear of the girl when she began her rambling talk. They believed she was surrounded by ghosts and talking with them. So Ward's request was refused, and stern orders were given that I should not be harmed. When the home villages were reached, he added, I might be burned.

When we made our second camp on the Kanawha I called Black Hoof to me. I had been staked out in spread-eagle fashion and my guards had placed saplings across my body and were preparing to lie down on the ends at each side of me. I assured the chief there was no danger of my running away, as my medicine would wither and die, did I forsake the great *manito's* child; and I asked him to relieve me

of the cords and saplings. He told the warriors to omit the cords.

The next time we halted to snatch a few hours' sleep he ordered that no more saplings be placed across me, that it would be sufficient to tie my ankles and wrists. This was a great relief. During this portion of the march the girl seemed oblivious to her surroundings, also to the fact that she was a captive. She showed a strong preference for Lost Sister's company, and would glance about worriedly if the young woman left her sight.

So it devolved on the two of us, both white, to care for her. There were times when she babbled of faraway scenes, of Williamsburg and her old home, of the streets of Norfolk and Richmond. She talked with those she had known as children. When in this condition the Indians were glad to keep away from us. Even Ward would not willingly remain within hearing of her sweet voice could he avoid so doing. And alas! There were other times when she was almost violent, when only Lost Sister could soothe and quiet her.

By the time we reached the mouth of the Great Kanawha no guard was kept over me that I could perceive; nor were my limbs any longer bound at night. At each camp Lost Sister ranged the woods and brought in roots and herbs and made strange-smelling messes in a camp kettle and assiduously dosed the girl.

Rafts were quickly knocked together and the crossing made to the Indian shore. I had expected the band to dig out hidden canoes and descend to the mouth of the Scioto. Instead we struck into a trail across-country. The path was well worn, and the fork we followed ended at the Scioto above Chillicothe, the principal Shawnee town.

Much of the distance Patricia walked, although the litter was taken along for her convenience. Lost Sister talked with me at times and I began to feel that the barrier between us was much lower. But she never spoke of the settlements or her brother. Her talk was always a red talk and she never addressed me except in Shawnee.

From her I learned we were making for Cornstalk's Town, some twenty-five miles above Chillicothe, located on Scippo Creek. Among border men this region was known as the Pickaway Plains. Near our destination was Grenadier Squaw's Town, named after Cornstalk's gigantic sister.

I suffered no incivility during the overland march. My status became that of an attendant on the great *manito's* medicine-child. Patricia continued in a dazed state of mind, but after two days of arduous travel I detected her weeping. Lost Sister enigmatically warned:

"She is another woman. She is more like the woman she once was. She must keep close to her *manito.*"

I could interpret this only to mean that the girl was recovering from her mental shock and was recalling bits of the past, and that she was safe only so long as the savages believed her to be insane. At our last camp from Cornstalk's Town Patricia insisted on walking beside me when the trace would permit it and she startled me by saying:

"My father was good to me."

"Do you remember me?" I asked.

"Remember you, Basdel? Why, of course. What a queer question." Then with a little frown she sighed and complained. "But I don't understand why I am here with you and these Indians. I wonder if it is a bad dream, if I will soon wake up."

I blundered along the best I could, striving to say nothing which might upset her. She suddenly refused to talk and began displaying much physical nervousness. Lost Sister promptly took her in hand and led her some distance in advance of me. That was the day the band split up, the bulk of the warriors leaving to go to their different villages. Half a dozen remained to press on to Cornstalk's Town.

Ward was among those who left us and he was unwilling to go. His departure was a great relief to me. His presence frightened the girl, although she gave no sign of remembering him as having been a factor in her life. It was due entirely to Lost Sister's appeal to Black Hoof that the renegade was ordered to Chillicothe.

As he was leaving us he promised me:

"I'll yet see you eating fire. That white squaw will see me again."

"I'll dance your mangy scalp some time," I retorted.

Whereat he used terms of abuse he had picked up from traders, and I struck him with my fist. Black Hoof stopped him from killing me, and threatened me with torture if I offended again. Then he ordered Ward to go.

The chief continued with us to Cornstalk's Town, but Cornstalk was not there; so he went in search of him at Grenadier Squaw's Town. Before leaving he gave orders that I was not to be molested so long as I did not attempt to escape. The town was inhabited by women and children largely, with a dozen men left to act as hunters.

It was plain that the fighting men of the tribe were gathering somewhere, probably at Chillicothe. Patricia was believed to be in touch with the *manito,* and was feared and respected accordingly. The days that followed were not unhappy for me; and Patricia appeared to be contented in a numb sort of way.

My own reaction to the anxieties and fears of our captivity devitalized me to a certain degree, I believed; else, I would not have been contented to settle down to the drowsy existence of village life. I did no hunting. I was a companion to the girl

when she wished for my company. Aside from that capacity the Indians looked on me as if I had been a tree.

I talked on general subjects with Lost Sister, always waiting for her to blaze the trace our words were to follow. Her red husband remained aloof from her from the day she took charge of Patricia. Whether he resented her companionship with us I do not know, and after our arrival he disappeared for a time.

I discovered I was lacking in curiosity as to what each morrow had in store for us. It savored of the indifference of the fatalist. But I did come to the alert when I observed Patricia was rapidly returning to normal. I remembered Lost Sister's warning, "She must keep close to her *manito*." I was forced to repeat these words to her.

It was one of the hardest tasks I ever undertook. She suffered deeply when she began to grasp my meaning. She began to remember things concretely. Yet life was the stake, and the fact that my life was also involved helped her much. With the aid of Lost Sister I taught her how to be ever on her guard, how to carry herself when in the presence of the silent but ever watchful Indians.

Once the shock wore off somewhat she found it was not difficult to keep up her rôle. The most effective way to allay any suspicion was for her to talk aloud to herself. The savages believed she was

holding conversation with inmates of the invisible world, and drew away from her. But while she improved, my lethargy continued. My physical and mental strength seemed to be sapped. I was content to lie on the bank of the creek, my mind idling with vagaries.

Some six weeks passed in this desultory fashion, then Cornstalk and Black Hoof returned to the village with three warriors and a negro woman. The woman had been captured at Sapling Grove within three hundred yards of Captain Evan Shelby's house, the woman told me. She also informed me that her captors were led by a very large man, much whiter than any of his companions, and that he talked good English.

This description fitted either John Logan or Will Emery, the Cherokee half-breed. I decided the man was Logan. The woman was treated kindly. Immediately on arrival the two chiefs retired to a wigwam for a long talk. Then Black Hoof sent for me and Patricia. I warned her to pay no attention to them, and to talk much to herself. She acted admirably and was kept in the wigwam only a few minutes.

Cornstalk had watched her closely, and both he and Black Hoof were uneasy and relieved when she departed. Toward me their manner was incisive, and they demanded certain information. As I knew conditions had changed vastly since I was captured

I talked freely and improvised considerably. There was no military value whatever to the news that I imparted.

Cornstalk, who was a large man and of a commanding appearance, and possessing unusual intellectual powers, was keen to learn about individuals, especially about Daniel Boone. He asked how many men Boone could lead against the Shawnees. I told him all the border men would be glad to serve under him, that he was collecting fighting men when I was taken prisoner.

"Your tongue is split," Cornstalk warned. "Be careful, or we will say that young medicine-woman does not need a liar to care for her. Be careful, or your tongue will be pulled out. The Shawnees will be glad to warm themselves at your fire. That man was sent to the Falls of the Ohio. He has returned to the settlements. He commands three forts in the lower valleys. Will he head riflemen to battle, or stay at the forts?"

I truthfully answered that I believed he would be given an important command. And I explained how Colonel Lewis would be over him as he would be over many other brave leaders. They knew Lewis and feared him. Their faces were very glum until I repeated Connolly's message to Charles Lewis that peace with the tribes was very possible. Then they smiled grimly and Cornstalk informed me.

"Your Dunmore ordered his Long Knives to

march against Shawnee towns ten sleeps after you were captured."*

I was startled at the information and glanced through the opening of the wigwam as if expecting to see the lean militia men breaking from the woods. The chief added:

"But they seem to have trouble in starting. Perhaps they are very old men and can not walk fast. I shall send my young men across the Ohio to dig them out of the mud."

"The Cherokees will not join the Shawnees," I ventured.

Cornstalk eyed me menacingly.

"They will not because they have old women among them. They put their powder in bags, and put the bags in caves. Their powder is spoiled. After I whip your army the Cherokees will carry their axes into the Carolinas."

I believed the Cherokees would do this, if our army were whipped. Turning to Black Hoof, Cornstalk asked:

"How long before you roast this white man?"

"After we have whipped the army of Dunmore and Lewis and Boone. Now he waits on the medicine-woman. After the battle there will be many white women to wait on her."

---

*Expedition against Indian towns ordered July 24th. Boone returned from Kentucky to the settlements August 27th.

I was dismissed and on reaching the open air I discovered I had left all my apathy behind me. The importance of time and the imperative need of immediate action was burned into my brain by Black Hoof's words. I sought Patricia and found her seated on the bank, staring into the sluggish waters.

"I was thinking of you, Basdel," she greeted, and she reached her hand to me. "I was remembering what I said in Salem about your rifle. I'm sorry. I did wrong."

"Heavens, child! Abuse the rifle all you will!"

"It was abuse of you and of all that your rifle stood for. I mocked you because you were from the border. Poor father! He knew many Indians, but he did not understand them. Town ways seem mighty small and of no account now."

"Patsy, you must get a grip on yourself. We must get clear of this village at once. We must get back to Virginia."

She shivered and her eyes dilated as she stared at me and she muttered:

"I dread the woods, the silence, the darkness. The wolves howling at night. Worst of all is the creeping horror of being chased. No! No! I can't stand any more, Basdel. The black horror comes over me when I let myself think of it. The dank woods—the silence—the awful stealth of night. No, no, Basdel. Let me die here."

"Patsy, grip yourself! You can't stay among

these beggars. They think you are insane. That's why they've spared you. But there's going to be a battle soon. If they win they'll bring many prisoners here. You must not be here then."

She interrupted me with a little heart-broken cry and clapped her hands to her eyes to blot out some horrid picture. It was harsh, but the way she was inclining led to permanent madness.

"We will steal away and make the Ohio. The Indians are busy planning for the big battle. They'll not spare many men to seek us. I will take you back to Virginia and across the mountains."

"Or we will both die," she whispered. "That wouldn't be bad. To die and be out of it all—But I mustn't speak for you, Basdel."

"You speak for both of us," I comforted. "Death isn't terrible. This is." And I swept my hand in a half-circle at the Shawnee wigwams forming the village. "Say nothing to Cousin's sister. I will make my plans at once. A gun, some powder and lead, and then we will go."

"And never come back to them alive?" she insisted, and she leaned forward and stared intently into my eyes.

"Never alive, sweetheart."

"That is much better," she quietly remarked. "And here comes my sister. She has been very good to me. I wish we could take her with us. Over the mountains, or to death."

"She refused to go over the mountains with her brother. We must tell her nothing," I warned.

Lost Sister gave me a quick glance as she came up. She gazed at Patricia in silence for a moment, then warned:

"The white woman must keep close to her *manito*. The eyes of the eagle and the ears of the fox are in this village."

"She is having bad thoughts," I told her. "Lead her thoughts through new paths."

As I strolled away I heard her beginning a Shawnee myth, in which it was explained why the wet-hawk feeds while flying, and how the small turkey-buzzard got its tufted head.

According to the notches cut in my long stick it was the first day of September. Now that Cornstalk was back and in conference with Black Hoof the village became a center of importance. Notable chiefs and medicine-men of the northern tribes began to assemble. Lost Sister pointed out to me Puck-e-shin-wa, father of a six-year-old boy, who was to become one of the most remarkable Indian characters in our history, under the name of Tecumseh.

Young Ellinipsico, son of Cornstalk, was there, gay in his war-trappings and eager for the battle. Blue Jacket, another famous Shawnee chief and warrior, was in attendance. Of the allied tribes I saw Chiyawee the Wyandot, Scoppathus the Mingo,

Redhawk the Delaware, and most interesting of all, John Logan, chief of the Mingos.

He was the son of a French man, who was adopted by the Oneidas, but he always claimed kin to the Cayuga, the term "Mingo" being loosely applied by our border men to any fragments of the Iroquois living outside the Long House in New York Province. Logan came and went inside an hour, spending all his time in a secret conference with Cornstalk.

I saw him as he strode through the little village, looking neither to right nor left, saturnine of countenance. He showed his white blood, being much lighter in complexion than the full-bloods. A warrior walked behind him, carrying his gun. The chief himself carried a long wand decorated with the ten or twelve scalps he had taken since Baker and Greathouse massacred his people at Baker's Bottom.

Young Cherokees, stolen away from their nation to be in at the death of the white race in Virginia, were present without leaders. Black Hoof's long absence from the villages was explained when a full score Ottawas filed into the opening and sang their war-song. Their spokesman loudly announced that they were but the advance of many of their tribe.

I feared I had waited too long, and was much relieved to learn from Lost Sister that warriors and chiefs were to move to Chillicothe at once and there

await the coming of the western bands. Their going would leave our village practically deserted except for aged and broken men and the women and children.

Lost Sister said her husband was eager to take the path, and that it was Cornstalk's plan to cross the Ohio instead of waiting to be attacked in his own country. She was vague as to the chief's exact plans once he had crossed the river, but by joining her brief statements together I was led to believe Cornstalk had learned that the Virginia forces had been split into two armies, and that the masterly red strategist planned to surprise and annihilate one, and then attack the second. This information alone was of sufficient importance for me to risk my life many times in order to apprise my superiors of the trap being set for them.

By the time the sun was half-way down the afternoon sky all the chiefs were moving down the river bound for Chillicothe. Young Ellinipsico and a mixed band of warriors were left to arrange for guarding the girl. He would depart for Chillicothe on the morrow. I went in search of the girl and met Lost Sister standing by a big honey-tree. She asked me if I had seen her husband, and looked worried when I shook my head.

"He said he would not go without seeing me, and yet he is not here in the village. Your white woman —she walks far from her *manito*. It is bad for her."

"She must leave here," I boldly said. "I must take her away." I had had no intention of taking her into my confidence, but I realized it would be impossible to make a start without her missing the girl. So I took the desperate course and did what I had warned Patricia not to do.

She drew her knife and cut some straight marks on the honey-tree.

"You see those?" she asked.

I bowed my head. Without explaining the relevancy of her question, she turned and walked rapidly toward the village. I stared at the marks and they told me nothing. There was nothing pictorial about them. I followed her among the wigwams, and was in time to see her leading Patricia into her wigwam. I sauntered after them, obsessed by the notion that strange forces were at work. The village seemed to be quiet and sleepy and yet the air was surcharged with threats of things about to happen.

When the storm broke it was from a quarter entirely different from anything I could have imagined. My first intimation that something unusual was happening was when a Shawnee ran into the village and began talking to Ellinipsico, who was lounging sleepily on the grass before his father's wigwam. I heard Ellinipsico exclaim:

"He must not be hurt. He has felt the hand of the great *manito* on his head."

I looked about for a weapon, so that I might go down fighting, for I first thought the stranger Indians were demanding me for a plaything, not understanding my true status as servant to the medicine-woman. I knew this was not the solution of the affair when Ellinipsico jumped to his feet and ran to the edge of the village, at every bound shouting to the Ottawas to hurry back to the village.

A loud outcry answered him from the forest. To my amazement Ellinipsico slowed down his mad pace and appeared to be reluctant to enter the woods. The few Shawnees and Mingos in the village followed his example in timidity. Then above the war-cry of the Ottawas rose the roar of Baby Kirst, punctuated by the crack of a rifle and the death-yell of a savage.

Now I understood. The Ottawas, ignorant of Kirst's condition, had met him blundering through the woods and had essayed to halt his progress. He promptly had offered fight, and they were at it, with the odds greatly in favor of the Indians. In my excitement I ran to where Ellinipsico stood. He was dancing with rage and fright. Beholding me, he ordered me to dive into the growth and stop the fight.

I glanced back and saw Lost Sister and Patricia leaving the wigwam. Lost Sister began leading her charge toward the south end of the village and jerked her head at me as though calling on me to

follow. It was driven into my mind that this was the time to escape with the girl. I plunged into the woods and no Indian cared to dog my steps.

I made as if to go to the scene of the fearful confusion, but once out of sight of Ellinipsico and his men I turned to intercept the course taken by Lost Sister and Patricia. I miscalculated the distance, or else the combatants made a rapid shift of ground, for before I knew it I was standing on the edge of a most ferocious struggle. Kirst was still mounted and bleeding from a dozen wounds. His long rifle was being swung for a club.

My first view of him was as he splintered the butt on an Ottawa head. He bawled in triumph. The Ottawas, expecting no diversion so near the village, were armed only with their knives and axes. A fellow leaped on to the horse and tried to stab him from behind, and one immense hand reached back and caught him by the neck and held him in mid-air, and squeezed the life from the painted body, and then hurled him among the remaining warriors.

The girl must come first, but it was not in my heart to pass without contributing something to Kirst's advantage. I snatched up a war-club, dropped by a slain savage, and hurled it into the thick of them, bowling over two. Kirst's horse went down, disemboweled. Now Kirst was at a great disadvantage, but his long arms gathered up two of the Ottawas, and I heard their ribs crack, as with a

pleased grunt the simple fellow contracted his embrace.

But now they were piling upon him, striking and stabbing, a living mound which for the moment concealed the big fellow. Then the mass began to disintegrate, and savages staggered back and fell dead, or suffering from terrible wounds. Kirst rose to his feet only to fall on his face as if shot through the head, although he received no wound at the time that I could perceive.

My last glance was fleeting, but it sufficed to count six silent forms of Ottawas who would never cross the Ohio to attack Lord Dunmore's armies. One Indian, gasping with pain, with both arms hanging like rags, lurched by me but not seeing me, his gaping mouth trying to sound his death-song. Ellinipsico was calling on his men to follow him, and I sped away.

Baby Kirst had fulfilled his destiny and would babble his way through the forests no more. The force which had destroyed his reason had paid the full price the law of compensation had worked out.

Could I find the girl without returning to the village I hoped the confusion resulting from the bloody struggle would permit me to steal away with her. I swung back toward the opening and soon discovered Patricia and Lost Sister. The latter on beholding me called me by name, the first time she had ever done so. As I ran to them she fiercely said:

"Take your white woman and go! Cross the Ohio but do not go up the Kanawha. Follow the Guyandotte or Sandy, into the valley of the Clinch. You must hurry!"

As if the day had not been hideous enough a bepainted warrior burst through the undergrowth as she finished, with his bow raised and an arrow drawn to the head. Beneath the war vermilion, I recognized Lost Sister's husband. She threw out her arms and smiled scornfully and cried:

"You hide in the bushes to watch me? I thought so."

Then she was down with an arrow buried to the feathers.

I leaped into the bushes and grappled with the murderer before he could draw another arrow from his quiver. He dropped his bow and endeavored to hurl me to the ground. As we whirled about I saw Patricia kneeling beside Lost Sister and striving to pet her back to life. One glimpse, and then all my attention was needed for my adversary. He was quicker than I, and his freshly oiled body made him hard to hold; but I was far the stronger.

"His knife, Basdel; Look out;" screamed Patricia; and I was glad to note there was no madness in her voice.

I had him by his right wrist, my left arm shoved under his chin and into his red throat. The girl's gaze sent my gaze downward. He was trying to

work the knife from its sheath before I could force him backward or break his neck. But the sheath was too long for the knife and he could not reach the handle with his fingers until he had forced the blade upward by pinching the tip of the sheath. I did not try to interfere with his maneuver, but settled myself solidly to hold him from escaping.

"The knife, Basdel!" she shrilly repeated. Then she nearly upset my calculations by trying to thrust a bough between my foe's feet. Only by a nimble maneuver did I escape being tripped; but it was heartening to know Patricia could respond to my needs.

"Stand clear!" I panted. "I have him!"

"But the knife!" she despairingly cried.

"He's getting it for me!" I replied.

Now he had managed to work the haft clear of the leather and his left hand was closing on it. His eyes told me that much. Instantly I changed my tactics. I dropped my left arm to seize his left wrist. I released his right wrist and with my free hand tore the weapon from his grasp. He struck me in the head with his free fist, but I felt it none as he did not have the white man's trick of delivering a buffet. We went down side by side, and by the time we had rolled over once he was dead by his own knife.

Retaining the weapon, I ran to Patricia as she collapsed by the side of the dying woman.

"I am all right! Get up!" I commanded.

Cousin's sister smiled grimly, and whispered:

"He has been watching us. He saw me come here when I scratched the tree. He has been hiding—The marks I made on the honey-tree—Look behind it—the pea-vines—. Tell Shelby I send him a little sister—" And she had solved all her problems, and had passed into the compassion of the *manito* whose gentleness and understanding surpass all comprehension.

Patricia was weeping softly, as one who sorrows with an aching heart, but not as one who is afraid. I gathered her up in my arms and made for the honey-tree close by. I stood her on her feet, and exhorted her to be brave as the time had come for us to take to flight. I plunged into the pea-vines behind the tree. A new thrill of life fired me as I fished out my own rifle, a powder-horn, shot-pouch and linen patches. Cousin's sister had even remembered to provide a roll of buckskin and an awl for mending our moccasins, and a small package of smoked meat.

Thus armed once more I took the girl's hand and stole through the woods, following the well-beaten path that led to Chillicothe, and planning to swing to the east and skirt the town under the cover of darkness. I desired to emerge on the Ohio at a point opposite the mouth of the Big Sandy. For some time we could hear the wailing and howling

of the Shawnees in Cornstalk's Town as they mourned for the dead Ottawas, and Patricia was sadly frightened. My ears were tingling for fear they would catch the cry of discovery, but young Ellinipsico was there instead of Black Hoof, and our flight was undiscovered.

CHAPTER XI

BACK TO THE BLUE WALL

WE REACHED the Ohio and I soon found a canoe. The trip down the Scioto had its danger thrills, and twice we narrowly escaped meeting bands of warriors on the main trace. I stuck to the path because of its advantages. None below us knew we had left the upper town, and would not be looking for us. In the beaten path there was much less chance of leaving signs for some scout to pick up and follow. I knew warriors would be scouring the country in all directions once the news of our escape was carried to Chillicothe, but the Scioto path was the last one they would expect us to take.

I had remembered Lost Sister's warning and planned to follow the Big Sandy until its head waters interlocked with those of the Clinch and Holston. It was nerve-wearing work, that crossing of the Ohio. With each dip of the paddle I expected rifles to crack behind me and canoes to poke their noses through the overhanging foliage and make after us. I could not see that the girl breathed dur-

ing the crossing, and I kept her in front of me as her face was a mirror to reflect instantly any danger on the Indian shore.

We landed at the mouth of Four-Mile Creek without any disturbing incidents. I told her we were four miles above the mouth of the Scioto and she was for placing more distance between us and that river at once. But it was impossible to travel all the time. Now we were foot-free, and as I had my rifle the Shawnees would pay high before catching up with us, I assured her. I had been at Four-Mile Creek the year before to survey five hundred acres of good bottom-land for Patrick Henry, and was of course familiar with the locality.

Five hundred yards back from the Ohio was an old fort. I took the girl there to rest while I patched our moccasins. The Indians said this structure was so ancient that no one knew who built it. As a matter of fact it was the remains of George Croghan's stone trading-house. Traces of an Indian town, antedating the fort, were also to be observed. Very possibly it was occupied by the Shawnees before they built their first town at the mouth of the Scioto on the west bank. It was from this Scioto town that Mary Ingles escaped in 1755, and the history of her daring and hardships rather belittled my feat in bringing Patricia from the upper town.

The poor girl continued extremely nervous and

I feared she would collapse. Now that she had tasted freedom she feared the Indians were hot on our trail. Her gaze was constantly roving to the Ohio. She was fearing to behold the Shawnees paddling across to recapture us. The moccasins had to be mended, however, as the night travel down the Scioto path had sadly damaged them.

As I sewed the whangs through the rips and hastily patched the holes I could see her worriment was increasing. That period of delay was more trying to her fortitude than when we were making the détour around Chillicothe and our very lives hung on luck, or the mercy of her *manito.*

"There is something in the river," she whispered, her slight figure growing rigid.

"Only a log," I told her.

"Look! Isn't there something moving in the bushes?" And she clutched my arm.

"Only the wind ruffling the tops," I soothed.

She was silent for a few minutes and then confessed:

"I dread and hate the river, Basdel. I wish we could get out of sight of it."

"It's a short trip in the canoe to the Big Sandy."

"And with the possibility of an Indian hiding behind every stump and log along the shore!"

"Then we will hide the canoe and strike across the bend. A few creeks to cross, and inside of two days we should reach the Big Sandy. It's about

thirty-five miles and there is the blaze left by the surveyors. Do you wish that? It will be harder for your feet than riding in the canoe. It may be easier on your nerves."

"Anything, Basdel, to get away from the river! And can't we start now? I know we shall see the Indians coming across to catch us if we stay here much longer."

I tossed her her moccasins and quickly mended mine and put them on. Leaving her to wait until I could draw up the canoe and hide it, I proceeded to conceal all traces of our landing as best I could, and then told her I was ready.

The bottoms on this side of the river are narrower than on the Indian shore, and the old surveyors' blaze proved to be a wet path. The small creeks were bordered with cane and when we encountered them it was hard on the girl. But she minded hardships none, and once we were out of sight of the river she regained some of her spirits. But a glimpse of the blue river brought back her old fears as though the Ohio were some monster able to reach out and seize her.

Before night I proved the river could be good to us. Against her will I had swung down to the shore and was leading her along a narrow beach in order to escape a bad tangle of briers when I had the good fortune to discover a *bateau* lodged against the bank. The girl begged me not to go near it

although it was obviously empty. I insisted and was rewarded with a bag containing a bushel of corn. Now we could have cooked it in our kettle had we been provided with that indispensable article. As it was there was life in munching the corn.

The undergrowth was a nuisance, being composed of pea-vines, clover, nettles, cane and briery berry bushes. I would not stop to camp until I could reach a tract free from the stuff. As a result it was nearly sunset by the time we halted in a mixed growth of hickory, ironwood and ash on the banks of a tiny creek. Here we could pick a path that left no signs. We rested a bit and then followed the creek toward its outlet for half a mile and came to a log cabin.

The girl dropped to the ground, glaring as if we were beholding the painted head of a Shawnee. I assured her it was a white man's cabin and probably empty. Leaving her behind an elm, I scouted the place and satisfied myself there had been no recent visitors there. I called to her to join me and proudly displayed an iron kettle I had found by the door. But when I would have left her to make the kettle boil while I looked for a turkey, she refused to stay and insisted on accompanying me.

Fortunately I perched a turkey within two hundred feet of the cabin. I hung the kettle in the fireplace and built a good fire under it and then dressed the turkey. For some reason the girl preferred the

open to the cabin and remained outside the door. As I finished my task she called to me excitedly. Grabbing my rifle, I ran out. She was pointing dramatically at a big blaze on a mulberry-tree. The scar was fresh, and on it some one had written with a charred stick:

Found some people killed here. We are gone down this way. DOUGLASS.

"What does it mean?" she whispered, her eyes very big as she stared at the dusky forest wall.

"That would be James Douglass," I mused. "He came down here with Floyd's surveying-party last spring. I wonder who was killed."

"Enough to know the Indians have been here," she said, drawing closer to me. "Can't we go the way they did and be safe?"

"We might make it. But 'gone down this way' means they started for New Orleans. A long, roundabout journey to Williamsburg."

"Oh, never that! I didn't understand," she cried. "I will be braver. But if the nearest way home was by the Ohio I would go by land. Anything but the river! Remember your promise that we are not to be taken alive. Now let's push on."

"And leave this excellent shelter?" I protested.

"Men have been killed here. I can't abide it. A few miles more—please."

Of course she had her own way, but I made her wait until we had cooked some corn to a mush and I had broiled the turkey. I could have told her it would be difficult for us to select any spot along the river which had not been the scene of a killing. So we took the kettle and left a stout, snug cabin and pushed on through the darkness to the top of a low ridge, where I insisted we must camp. We made no fire.

I estimated the day's travel to have been twelve miles at the least, which was a good stint for a man, let alone a girl unused to the forest. Nor had the work wearied her unduly. At least she had gained something from her captivity—a strength to endure physical hardships which she had never known before. With good luck and half-way decent footing I believed another sunset would find us at the Big Sandy. That night was cold and I sorely regretted our lack of blankets.

Before sunrise I had a fire burning and the kettle of mush slung on a green sapling for further cooking. Patricia was curled up like a kitten, and I recovered my hunting-shirt and slipped it on without her knowing I had loaned it to her for a covering. She opened her eyes and watched me a few moments without comprehending where she was. With a little cry she jumped to her feet and roundly unbraided me for not calling her to help in the work.

I pointed out a spring, and by the time she was

ready to eat the hot mush and cold turkey, the fire was out and we were ready to march. Our lack of salt was all that prevented the meal from being very appetizing. We were not inclined to quarrel with our good fortune, however, but ate enough to last us the day. As the first rays touched the tops of the trees we resumed the journey.

We covered a good ten miles when we had our first serious mishap since leaving the Indian village. Patricia had insisted she be allowed to take the lead where the blazed trees made the trace easy to follow. I humored her, for she kept within a rod of me. We struck into a bottom and had to pick our way through a stretch of cane.

Afraid she might stumble on to a bear and be sadly frightened, I called on her to wait for me. But she discovered a blaze on a sycamore beyond the cane and hurried forward. Half-way through the cane she slipped on a wet root and fell on her side. Ordinarily the accident would not have been serious, but the moment I saw the expression of pain driving her face white I knew she was hurt. I dropped the kettle and picked her up. She winced and groaned and said it was her arm. I carried her to the high ground and made her sit while I examined her hurt. I expected to find the bone broken. I was happily disappointed, and yet she was hurt grievously enough. A section of cane had penetrated the upper arm near the shoulder, making a

nasty wound. As the cane had broken off in the flesh it was necessary for me to play the surgeon. Using a pair of bullet-molds I managed to secure a grip on the ugly splinter and pull it out. She gave a little yelp, but did not move.

"The worst is over," I told her. "Now we must dress it."

Returning and securing the kettle, I dipped water from a spring and lighted a fire and hung the kettle to boil. Then I hunted for Indian medicine. I soon found it, the bark of a linn or bee-tree root. This I pounded and bruised with the butt of my rifle and threw it into the kettle to boil. Patricia remained very patient and quiet, her eyes following my every move.

"You're as useful as a housewife, Basdel," she remarked. "More useful than most women could be."

"Only a trick learned from the environment," I lightly replied. "Does it hurt much?" This was rhetorical, for I knew a stab wound from the cane smarted and ached most disagreeably.

"Not much," she bravely replied. "I'm sorry to bother you, though."

"You'll soon be as fit as a fiddle," I assured her. "Border men are continually helping each other in this fashion."

As soon as the kettle boiled I washed the wound in the liquid and made sure all of the cane had been

removed. This additional probing caused her pain but she showed no signs not even by flinching. The application at once had a soothing effect. We waited until the medicine had cooked down to a jelly-like consistency, when I applied it as a salve, working it into and thoroughly covering the wound. Then I tied it up with a strip torn from her skirt. Rather rough surgery, but I knew it would be effective.

She bitterly lamented over the time we were losing, and blamed herself so severely that I finally consented to go on, providing she would keep behind me. Had the hurt been in her foot we would have been forced to camp for several days.

Toward night the country grew more broken and much rougher, and I knew we were nearing the Sandy. I feared she might trip over some obstacle, and we camped before the light deserted us. I told her we were within a few miles of the river and that we ought to strike it at the mouth of Savage Creek, some four or five miles from the Ohio. After starting a fire, she volunteered to remain and feed it while I looked for game. This in the way of doing penance, perhaps. I had the good luck to shoot a deer and we dined on venison.

After we had eaten she sat close by the fire and was silent for many minutes. That she was meditating deeply was shown by her indifference to the night sounds which usually perturbed her. The

howling of the wolves, and the scream of a panther, leaping to make a kill, passed unheard. Suddenly she declared:

"You were right, Basdel."

"About what, Patsy?"

"About my not fitting in west of the mountains."

"That was said before you were tried. No woman, even border-born, could be more brave than you have been."

"And I was so woefully wrong when I made fun of your long rifle. I want you to forgive me."

"Patsy, don't. You are wonderful."

"Still being good to me, Basdel. But I know the truth now. Back over the mountains I was wicked enough to feel a little superior to frontier folks. No. Don't wave your hands at me. I must say it. I even felt a little bit of contempt for those brave women who went barefooted. God forgive me! I was a cat, Basdel. A vicious cat!"

"Good heavens, Patsy! Say it all and have done with it. Call yourself a pirate."

She would not respond to my banter, but fell to staring into the handful of coals. Then the tears began streaming down her face, and at last she sobbed:

"Poor girl! Poor girl! She was a wonderful friend to me. She never had any chance, and you can never know how hard she tried to keep my spirits up; how ready she was to stand between

me and harm—me, who has had every chance! And to end like that! And yet it was far worse to live like that. It's best as it is, but God must be very good to her to make up for what she lost. Tell me, Basdel, did she suffer much when she died?"

She could be talking only of Cousin's sister. I declared:

"She suffered none. It's best for her as it is."

She fell asleep with her back against a black walnut, and I spread my hunting-shirt over her, for the air was shrewdly cool. In the dying coals I saw pictures, wherein Kirst, Dale, and Lost Sister paraded in turn; the fate of each the result of race-hatred, and a race-avidity to possess the land. And a great fear came over me that the girl leaning against the walnut, the mass of blue-black hair seeming to bow down the proud head, was destined to be added to the purchase-price the frontier was ever paying.

It was her talk and tears that induced this mood, for I knew the Shawnees would have overtaken us by this time had they found our trail on the Kentucky shore. Common sense told me that for the remainder of our journey we would, at worst, be compelled to avoid small scouting-parties that had no intimation of our presence on the Big Sandy.

But so many gruesome pranks had been played by Fate that I was growing superstitious. And I

feared lest the girl should be snatched from me at the last moment, just as safety was almost within sight. I slept poorly that night and what little rest I did obtain was along toward morning.

The girl awoke me; and I felt my face burning as I beheld her standing there, staring down accusingly, the hunting-shirt spread across my chest. I sprang to my feet and slipped into the shirt, which was made like a coat, and waited for her to speak.

"So you've been sleeping cold," she said.

"Nay. Very warm," I replied, becoming busy with my moccasins.

"After this I will keep awake nights."

"I did not need it. I always take it off at night. It makes me too warm."

"You lie most beautifully, Basdel."

"How is the arm this morning?"

"Much better. But you must be more honest with me. You must not lie any more."

"You're making a mountain out of a hunting-shirt. It is too warm to wear at night in this mild weather."

"You're hopeless. Of course it is not too warm in the warm sunshine."

I was glad to let it go at that. And there was no warm sunshine this morning. The heavens were overcast with gray cold clouds that rode high and brought wind rather than rain. We missed the sun. Town-dwellers can never know the degree of de-

pendence the forest wanderer places on the sunlight for his comfort and good cheer. Despair becomes gaiety under the genial rays. It is not surprising the sun should be the greatest of all mysteries to the Indians, and therefore their greatest medicine or god.

We ate of the venison and mush and started for the river. The distance was not great, but the way was very rough, and there were no more blazed trees to guide us, the surveyors' trace passing below us and closer to the shore. But I was familiar with the lay of the land and it was impossible for me to go far wrong as long as all streams flowed into the Ohio and we crossed at right angles with their general course.

I carried the kettle slung on my rifle and with my right hand gave the girl aid when the path became unusually difficult. A wrenched ankle would leave us as helpless as a broken leg. It required three hours of painful effort to bring us to the Sandy.

I found a fording and carried her across to the east shore and soon located a trader's trace. She never dreamed that her father often had traveled along this faint path in his visits to the Ohio Indians. Now that the footing was easier she had time to gaze about, and the aspect depressed her.

The immense hills of sandrock were worn into deep and gloomy ravines by the streams. In the walls of the ravines black holes gaped, for caves

were almost as numerous as springs. To encourage a lighter mood I explained that these very caves made the country an ideal place for hiding from the Indians.

She broke into my talk by moaning:

"May the good God help us! See that!"

She was pointing to a dark opening across the river. This framed the face of the devil. For a moment I was sadly startled, then laughed hysterically in relief.

"It's a bear, with a white or gray marking on his face," I explained. "He is harmless. See! He's finished looking us over and goes back into his den."

But the effect of the shock to her nerves did not wear off for some time. To prepare her against more glimpses of bruin I told her how the broken nature of the country made it a favorite region for bears, and that it had been long known along the border as a famous hunting-ground for the big creatures.

"I feel just as if it was the guardian spirit of an evil place, that it is spying on us and plotting to harm us," she confessed.

Whenever the trace permitted I swung aside from the river and took to the ridges. The tops of these were covered with chestnuts and their sides with oaks. More than once on such détours I sighted furtive furry forms slipping away from their feast on the fallen nuts, but Patricia's gaze was not suf-

ficiently trained to detect them; and she wandered through the groves without knowing we were literally surrounded by bears.

While a wild country, it was relieved by many beautiful touches. Such were the tulip-trees, or yellow poplar. Many of them towered a hundred feet with scarcely a limb to mar the wand-like symmetry of the six-foot boles. Scarcely less inspiring were the cucumber-trees, or mountain magnolias, which here reached the perfection of growth.

Scattered among these tall ones were white and yellow oaks; and they would be considered giants if standing alone. These were the serene gods of the forest, and they had a quieting influence on my companion. It was with regret that I led her back along the rough shore of the river.

I shot a young bear, but Patricia displayed a foolish repugnance and would eat none of it. Later in the day I killed a deer with such a minute charge of powder as emphatically to establish my excellence as a marksman for that one shot at least. We were nearly three days in making the Tug Fork of the Sandy.

The girl bore the hardships well. The wound on her arm healed rapidly, and whatever she actually suffered was mental rather than physical. Our kettle proved second only to my rifle in importance, and if the fare lacked the savor of salt our appetites made up for the deficit. When we reached the Tug we were in the region celebrated for Colonel Andrew

Lewis' "Sandy Creek Voyage of Fifty-six," as it was styled with grim facetiousness.

It was one instance when Colonel Lewis failed of carrying out an enterprise against the Indians. It was a retaliatory raid against the Shawnees and his force was composed of whites and Cherokees; and his lack of success was due largely to the inefficiency of the guides who undertook to pilot him to the mouth of the Sandy. I told the girl of the expedition as it was lacking in horrible details, and with other carefully selected narratives tried to keep her from brooding.

She seldom mentioned her father, and when she did it was usually connected with some phase of life over the mountains. I believe that she was so thankful to know he escaped the torture that his death lost much of poignancy. Only once did she revert to his taking off, and then to ask:

"Was there a single chance for him to escape?"

And I emphatically declared he never had the ghost of a chance from the moment he fell into Black Hoof's hands.

Another ruse to keep her mind engaged was to trace out our course with a stick on a patch of bare earth. I showed how we should travel to the north fork of the Sandy and then strike to the head of Bluestone, and follow it nearly to the mouth before leaving it to cross New River; then a short journey to the Greenbriar and Howard's Creek.

Had I had any choice I should have preferred to

take her over the mountains to Salem, but my time was not my own and it was imperative that I leave her at the first place of safety and be about Governor Dunmore's business. My decision to make Howard's Creek was strengthened by an adventure which befell us near the end of our first day on the Tug. We were casting about for a place to camp when we came upon five Indians, three squaws and two hunters.

Patricia was greatly frightened on beholding them, and it was some time before I could make her understand that they were friendly Delawares, accompanied by their women, and not painted nor equipped for war. After calming her I addressed them and learned they were from White Eye's village. They were afraid to go near the settlements.

Many "Long Knives," as they called the Virginia militia, were flocking to the Great Levels of the Greenbriar, and a forward movement of a whole army was shortly to be expected. As the presence of a large force of our riflemen so near Howard's Creek would insure the safety of that settlement I knew it to be the proper ending of our journey.

I induced Patricia to remain in camp with the Indians while I went out and shot a bear. The bear was very fat and I gave all the meat to the natives, for which they were grateful. One of them had a smoothbore, but no powder. I could spare him none.

Patricia was now convinced the Indians would not harm us, but she would not consent to making camp near them. We walked several more miles before she was willing to stop and cook the kettle.

My tally-stick gave the thirteenth of September as the date of our arrival at Howard's Creek. The settlers informed me I had lost a day somewhere on the long journey and that it was the fourteenth. Nearly all the young and unmarried men were off to fight in Colonel Lewis' army, and many of the heads of families, including Davis and Moulton.

Those who were left behind gave us a royal welcome. Uncle Dick, the aged one, fell to sharpening his long knife with renewed vigor. Patricia and I had been counted as dead. Dale's death had been reported by young Cousin, and it caused no great amount of sorrow. The girl was never allowed to suspect this indifference. In reply to my eager inquiries I was told that Shelby Cousin was at the Great Levels, serving as a scout.

For once Howard's Creek felt safe. With nothing to worry about the men and women became garrulous as crows. The children played "Lewis' Army" from sunrise to sunset. The Widow McCabe swore she would put on a hunting-shirt and breeches and go to war. The passing of men between the levels and the creek resulted in some news and many rumors. The meeting-place at the levels was called Camp Union. Colonel Lewis, pur-

suant to orders from Governor Dunmore, had commenced assembling the Augusta, Botetourt and Fincastle County troops at the levels on August twenty-seven. Cornstalk's spies had served him well!

His Lordship was to lead an army, raised from the northwest counties and from the vicinity of Fort Pitt, down the Ohio and unite with Colonel Lewis at the mouth of the Great Kanawha. Colonel Charles Lewis, with some Augusta and Botetourt troops, had left Camp Union on September sixth to drive the cattle and four hundred pack-animals to the mouth of the Elk, where he was to make canoes for transporting provisions to the Ohio.

The main army had marched from Camp Union on the twelfth, although Colonel Lewis had received a letter from Dunmore, urging that the rendezvous be changed to the mouth of the Little Kanawha. Colonel Lewis had replied it was impossible to alter his line of march.

From a fellow sent out to round up stray bullocks I learned the army would avoid the deep gorge and falls in the river by marching ten miles inland and parallel to the east bank, joining Colonel Charles Lewis at the Elk.

By another man I was told how the militia men were given to shooting away their precious ammunition, and how the colonel had warned that unless the practise ceased no more powder would be given

out. That the Indians were active and not afraid of the troops was evidenced by an attack on Stewart's Fort, only four miles from Camp Union. And this, before the troops marched.

Colonel William Christian was in command of the rear-guard, and his men were much disgruntled at the thought of not being in the forefront of the fighting. What was most significant to me, although only an incident in the estimation of the men left at Howard's Creek, was the attack made by two Indians on two of Lewis' scouts, Clay and Coward by name.

The scouts had separated and one of the Indians fired on and killed Clay. Thinking him to be alone, the Indians ran to get his scalp, and Coward at a distance of a hundred yards shot him dead. Coward then ran back toward the line of march and the surviving Indian fled down the Great Kanawha to inform the Shawnee towns that the Long Knives were coming.

I lost no time in securing a horse and a supply of powder and in hurrying to say good-by to Patricia. She was very sober when I told her I was off to overtake the army. Placing both hands on my shoulders, she said:

"Basdel, I know you've forgiven all the disagreeable things I've said to you. I will wait here until I hear from you. I will pray that you have an equal chance with the other brave men."

"I will come back and take you over the mountains."

"If you will only come back you may take me where you will, dear lad, even if it be deeper into the wilderness," she softly promised.

And Mrs. Davis bustled out of the cabin and energetically shooed the curious youngsters away.

And now I was riding away to battle, riding right joyously over the chestnut ridges and through the thick laurel, through stretches of pawpaw, beech and flowering poplar, with the pea-vine and buffalo grass soft underfoot. And my heart was as blithe as the mocking-bird's and there was no shadow of tomahawk or scalping-knife across my path.

I knew the destiny of the border was soon to be settled, that it hinged on the lean, leather-faced riflemen ahead, but there was nothing but sunshine and glory for me in that September day as I hastened to overtake the grim-faced man who believed His Lordship, John Murray, fourth Earl of Dunmore, Viscount Fincastle, Baron of Blair, Monlin and of Tillimet, was Virginia's last royal governor.

CHAPTER XII

THE SHADOWS VANISH

I FOLLOWED the river, the cord of the bow, and made good time where the army would have had difficulty to get through. A dozen miles below the falls and near the mouth of Kelly's Creek, where Walter Kelly was killed by the Indians early in August, I came upon a scout named Nooney. We were on the west bank and the river was two hundred yards wide at that point. Nooney begged some tobacco and pointed out a fording-place and gave me the "parole." This, very fittingly, was "Kanawha." He said I would speedily make the camp and that Colonel Lewis was with the first troops.

I lost no time in crossing and had barely cleared the river-bank before I was held up by an outpost. This fellow knew nothing of military red-tape. He was plain militia, a good man in a fight, but inclined to resent discipline. He grinned affably as I broke through the woods and lowered his rifle.

"Gim'me some tobacker," he demanded good-naturedly.

"I suppose you'd want the parole," I replied, fishing out a twist of Virginia leaf.

"I got that. It's 'Kanawha.' What I want is tobacker. Don't hurry. Le's talk. I'm lonesome as one bug all alone in a buffler robe. See any footin' over 'cross? I'm gittin' tired o' this outpost business. All foolishness. We'll know when we strike th' red devils. No need o' havin' some one tell us. Your hoss looks sorter peaked. S'pose we'll have a mess of a fight soon? We boys come along to fight, not to stand like stockade-timbers out here all alone."

I told him I had important news for Colonel Lewis and must not tarry. He took it rather ill because I would not tell him my news, then tried to make me promise I would come back and impart it. I equivocated and led my horse on toward the camp, concealed from view of the river-bank by a ribbon of woods. The first man I met was Davis, and the honest fellow was so rejoiced to see me that he dropped his gun and took both my hands and stood there with his mouth working, but unable to say a word. Big tears streamed down his face.

I hurriedly related my adventures, and his joy was treble when he heard that Patricia was safe at Howard's Creek.

"Shelby Cousin shot and kilt Dale. He told us 'bout that. Ericus thought he knew it all. Wal, them that lives longest learns th' most," he philo-

sophically observed. "Powerful glad to see you. We'll be seein' more of each other, I take it. How's my woman? Good. She's a right forward, capable woman, if I do say it. Moulton's out on a scout. Silent sort of a cuss these days from thinkin' 'bout his woman an' th' children. But a rare hand in a mess."

"And Cousin?"

"Say, Morris, that feller acts like he was reg'lar happy. Laughs a lot, only it don't sound nat'ral. He's a hellion at scoutin'. Poor Baby Kirst! I must 'low it's best for him to be wiped out, but it's too bad he couldn't 'a' made his last fight along with us. There's th' colonel in his shirt-sleeves smokin' his pipe."

I passed on to where Lewis was sitting on a log. It was fearfully hot, as the high hills on each side of the river shut out the free air and made the camp an oven. On recognizing me, the colonel's eyes flickered with surprise, as the report of my capture had spread far. He rose and took my hand and quietly said:

"I knew they couldn't hold you unless they killed you on the spot. What about Miss Dale?"

I informed him of her safety and his face lighted wonderfully.

"That's good!" he softly exclaimed. "A beautiful young woman, the kind that Virginia is always proud of. Ericus Dale was lucky to die without

being tortured. Now for your news; for you must be bringing some."

I told him of the mighty gathering at Chillicothe and of the influx of the fierce Ottawas. Lost Sister's warning to me to keep clear of the Great Kanawha impressed him deeply. It convinced him, I think, that the astute Cornstalk had planned to attack the army before it could cross the Ohio, and that the Shawnees on learning of the assembling at the levels knew the advance must be down the Kanawha. The Indian who escaped after Clay was killed was back on the Scioto by this time. After musing over it for a bit he insisted that it did not necessarily follow the attack would be in force.

"That was Cornstalk's first plan. But now he knows Governor Dunmore has an army at the mouth of the Little Kanawha. He may choose to attack him instead of me. I hope not, but there's a strong chance he'll do that while making a feint to fool me, and then float down the river and give me a real battle."

He kindly offered to attach me to one of the companies as sergeant, with the possibility of appointing me an ensign, but I preferred to act as scout and enjoy more independence of action.

"That's the trouble," he remarked. "All these fellows want to be scouts and range the woods free of discipline. They want to whip the Indians but they want to do it their own way. They persist in

wasting ammunition, and it now looks as if we would go into battle with less than one-fourth of a pound of powder per man.

"If any man speaks up and says he is the best marksman in Virginia then every man within hearing challenges him to prove it. And they'll step one side and have a shooting-match, even if they know Cornstalk's army is within a couple of miles of us. They're used to bear- and deer-meat. They don't want to eat bullock-meat. I'll admit the beef is a bit tough. And every morning some of them break the rules by stealing out to kill game. This not only wastes powder, but keeps the outposts alarmed."

Before I was dismissed I asked about Cousin. The colonel's face became animated.

"Oh, the young man with the sad history? He's out on a scout. That fellow is absolutely fearless. I am surprised every time he lives to return to make a report. It's useless to lay down a route for him to scout; he prowls where he will. But he's valuable, and we let him have his own way."

On the next day we marched to the mouth of the Elk where Colonel Charles Lewis was completing arrangements for transporting the supplies down the river. While at that camp I went on my first scout and found Indian tracks. One set of them measured fourteen inches in length. The men went and looked at the signs before they would accept my measurements.

The camp was extremely busy, for we all knew the crisis was drawing close. Our armorer worked early and late unbreeching the guns having wet charges. Three brigades of horses were sent back to Camp Union for more flour. I went with Mooney on a scout up Coal River and we found Indian signs four miles from camp. Other scouts were sent down the Kanawha and up the Elk.

On returning, I found Cousin impatiently waiting for me to come in. He had changed and his bearing puzzled me. He was given to laughing loudly at the horse-play of the men, yet his eyes never laughed. I took him outside the camp and without any circumlocution related the facts concerning his sister and Kirst.

"Tell me again that part 'bout how she died," he quietly requested when I had finished. I did so. He commented:

"For killing that redskin I owe you more'n I would if you'd saved my life a thousand times. So little sister is dead. No, not that. Now that woman is dead I have my little sister back again. I took on with this army so's I could reach the Scioto towns. To think that Kirst got way up there! I 'low he had a man's fight to die in. That's the way. Morris, I'm obleeged to you. I'll always remember her words 'bout sendin' a little sister to me. Now I've got two of 'em. We won't talk no more 'bout it."

With that he turned and hurried into the woods.

The men continued firing their guns without having obtained permission, and Colonel Lewis was thoroughly aroused to stop the practise. He directed that his orders of the fifteenth be read at the head of each company, with orders for the captains to inspect their men's stock of ammunition and report those lacking powder. This reduced the waste, but there was no stopping the riflemen from popping away at bear or deer once they were out of sight of their officers.

I had hoped Cousin would return and be my companion on the next scout, but as he failed to show up I set off with Mooney for a second trip up the Coal. This time we discovered signs of fifteen Indians making toward the Kanawha below the camp. We returned with the news and found a wave of drunkenness had swept the camp during our absence.

The sutlers were ordered to bring no more liquor into camp, and to sell from the supply on hand only on a captain's written order. This served to sober the offenders speedily. The scouts sent down the Kanawha returned and reported two fires and five Indians within fifteen miles of the Ohio. It was plain that the Indians were dogging our steps day and night, and the men were warned not to straggle.

We were at the Elk Camp from the twenty-fourth to the thirtieth, and on the latter date the canoemen

loaded their craft, and the pack-horse men and bullock-drivers drew two days' rations and started down-river. It rained for three days and on October second we were camped near the mouth of the Coal. It was there that Cousin appeared, a Mingo scalp hanging at his belt. He informed Colonel Lewis he had been to the mouth of the river, making the down-trip in a canoe, and that as yet no Indians had crossed except small bands of scouts.

Breaking camp, we encountered rich bottom-lands, difficult to traverse because of the rain. Every mile or two there were muddy creeks, and the pack-horses were nearly worn out. Several desertions were now reported from the troops, a hostility to discipline rather than cowardice being the incentive. Another trouble was the theft of supplies.

As we advanced down the river signs of small bands of Indians became numerous; scarcely a scout returned without reporting some. I saw nothing of Cousin until the sixth of October, and as we were finishing an eight-mile march through long defiles and across small runs and were entering the bottom which extends for four miles to the Ohio. The first that I knew he was with us was when he walked at my side and greeted:

"There's goin' to be a screamin' big fight."

He offered no explanation of his absence and I asked him nothing. It had required five weeks to march eleven hundred men one hundred and sixty

miles and to convey the necessary supplies the same distance.

As we scouts in the lead entered the bottom Cousin called my attention to the high-water marks on the trees. Some of these measured ten feet. The Point itself is high. From it we had a wide view of the Ohio and Kanawha, up- and down-stream. It was Cousin who discovered a writing made fast to a tree, calling attention to a paper concealed in the hollow at the base of the tree. We fished it out and found it was addressed to Colonel Lewis. Cousin and I took it to him. Before opening it, he gave Cousin a shrewd glance and remarked:

"I am glad to see you back, young man."

"If I've read the signs right I 'low I'm glad to git back," was the grave reply.

The letter was from Governor Dunmore, and he wrote to complain because our colonel had not joined him at the Little Kanawha. He now informed our commander he had dropped down to the mouth of the Big Hockhocking, and we were expected to join him there. After frowning over the communication, Colonel Lewis read it aloud to some of his officers and expressed himself very forcefully. It was soon camp gossip, and every man was free to discuss it.

Much anger was expressed against Governor Dunmore. And it did seem absurd to ask our army to move up the Ohio some sixty miles when such a

tedious maneuver would lead us farther from the Indian towns than we were while at the Point. Had the order been given for the army to go to the Hockhocking there would have been many desertions.

I learned later that the letter was brought to the Point by Simon Kenton and Simon Girty, who with Michael Cresap were serving as scouts with Dunmore. While the camp was busily criticizing the governor our scouts from the Elk came in and reported seeing Indians hunting buffalo. When within six miles of the Point, they found a plowshare, some surveying-instruments, a shirt, a light blue coat and a human under jaw-bone.

Shelby Cousin said the dead man was Thomas Hoog, who with two or three of his men were reported killed by the Indians in the preceding April while making improvements. Cousin insisted his death had been due to wild animals or an accident, after which the animals had dragged his remains into the woods. He argued that an Indian would never have left the coat or the instruments.

We passed the seventh and eighth of the month in making the camp sanitary and in building a shelter for the supplies yet to arrive down the river. Preparations also went ahead for moving the army across the Ohio. Most of the scouts were sent out to hunt up lost beeves, while a sergeant and squad were despatched with canoes to the Elk after flour.

Three men came in from the Elk and reported that Colonel Christian was camped there with two hundred and twenty men, that he had only sixteen kettles, and was fearing his men would be ill from eating too much roast meat "without broth." On the eighth there arrived more letters from Governor Dunmore, in which His Lordship expressed his surprise and annoyance because of our failure to appear at the Hockhocking.

This time Colonel Lewis was quite open in expressing his disgust at the governor's lack of strategy. The Kanawha was the gate to Augusta, Botetourt and Fincastle Counties. To leave it and move up-river would leave the way open for the red army to stream into Virginia and work its savagery while the colonials were cooped up on the Ohio or hunting Indian wigwams in the wilderness.

In the package was a letter to our colonel from Colonel Adam Stephens, second in command to His Excellency, which was given wide publicity. Colonel Stephens reported very disagreeable news from Boston. It was to the effect that General Gage had fired on the people at Cambridge. Later we learned that while some gun-powder and two cannon had been seized by His Majesty's troops there had been no massacre of the provincials. But while the rumor remained uncontradicted it caused high excitement and great rage.

On the evening of the ninth Cousin and I were

ordered out to scout up the river beyond Old Town Creek. Our camp was near the junction of the Kanawha and the Ohio, almost at the tip of the Point. About a fourth of a mile to the east is Crooked Creek, a very narrow stream at that season of the year, with banks steep and muddy. It skirts the base of some low hills and flows nearly south in emptying into the Kanawha. Half-way between our camp and Old Town Creek, which empties into the Ohio, is a small stretch of marsh-land extending north and south, with bottom-lands on each side.

Cousin and I planned to keep along the Ohio shore until a few miles above Old Town Creek, when we would separate, one returning along our course to keep an eye on the river, the other circling to the east and swinging back through the low hills drained by Crooked Creek. This double reconnaissance should reveal any spies.

The men were very anxious to cross the river and come in contact with the Indians. They believed they would have the allied tribes within their grasp once they reached the Scioto. They were cheered by the report that the army would cross on the morrow. One tall Watauga boy boastfully proclaimed that all the Shawnees and Mingos beyond the Ohio wouldn't "make more'n a breakfast for us." Davis, because a man of family and more conservative, insisted it would be a "pretty tough chunk of a fight."

This was the optimistic spirit Cousin and I left behind us when we set out at sunset. Cousin was in a new mood. There was a certain wild gaiety, rather a ferocious gaiety, in his bearing. His drawn face had lost some of the hard lines and looked almost boyish and his eyes were feverishly alight. He seemed possessed of superabundant physical strength, and in pure muscular wantonness went out of his way to leap the fallen timbers which littered the shore.

As darkness increased he ceased his wild play and became the prince of scouts. We advanced most leisurely, for we had all night if we cared to stay out. We halted when abreast of the marsh-land and seated ourselves on the banks of the Ohio and watched the starlight find a mirror in the water. After a protracted silence he abruptly asked:

"My sister said she was sendin' me a new sister, you say?"

"Those were her words."

"I wish she could know to-night I ain't needin' any new sister. Wish she could know right now that she's always been my sister. When I reckoned I'd lost her I was just mistook. She was just gone away for a little while. She found a mighty hard an' rough trace to travel. I 'low the Almighty will have to give her many belts afore He smooths out the path in her mind. I 'low it'll take a heap o' presents to make up for the burrs an' briers an'

sharp stones she had to foot it over. Thank God she died *white!*"

"Amen to that!"

After another silence he asked:

"You 'low she's with daddy an' mammy?"

"I do."

"That's mighty comfortin' to figger on," he slowly mused. "Much like a younker gittin' mighty tired an' goin' back home to rest. Daddy an' mammy will do a heap to make it up to her for what she had to go through. Yes, I can count on 'em, even if the Almighty happened to be too busy to notice her when she first crossed the border."

Dear lad! He meant no irreverence.

The night was calm and sounds carried easily. We had passed beyond where we could hear the men singing and merry-making in camp, but the uneasy movements of a turkey and the stealthy retreat of a deer seemed very close at hand. The soft *pad-pad* of a woods cat approached within a few feet before the creature caught the scent, and the retreat was marked by a series of crashings through the undergrowth.

After a while we rose and continued up the river.

"No Injuns along here," murmured Cousin.

We reached Old Town Creek and crossed it without discovering any signs of the enemy; nor were we looking for anything more serious than a stray scout or two. We went nearly two miles above the

creek and turned back after deciding we would separate at the creek, he taking the hills route and I following the river. We reached the creek and he was about to leave me when we both heard a new note, a splashing noise, very faint. Our hands met in a mutual desire to grab an arm and enforce attention.

"No fish made it," I whispered.

"No fish," he agreed. "There!"

The splashing came from across the several hundred yards of the Ohio's deep and silent current. It was repeated until it became almost continuous, and it gradually grew louder.

"Rafts!" shrilly whispered Cousin.

"They are paddling fast."

"No! But there are many rafts," he corrected.

We retreated up-stream a short distance and concealed ourselves in a deep growth. To the sound of poles and paddles was added the murmuring of guttural voices. Then for a climax a raft struck against the bank and a low voice speaking Shawnee gave some sharp orders.

"One!" counted Cousin.

As he spoke another raft took the shore, and then they grounded so rapidly that it was impossible to count them. Orders were given, and the Indians worked back from the river and proceeded to make a night-camp. The landing had been made at the mouth of the creek, but the savages had spread out, and some of them were due east from us.

"There's a heap of 'em!" whispered Cousin. "Lucky for us they didn't fetch any dawgs along, or we'd be smelled out an' have to leg it."

"I hear squaws talking."

"Kiss the devil if you don't! There's boys' voices, too. They've fetched their squaws an' boys along to knock the wounded an' dyin' in the head."

"Then that means they feel sure of winning."

And my heart began thumping until I feared its beating would be audible at a distance. And before my inner gaze appeared a picture of Lewis' army defeated and many victims being given over to the stake.

"Keep shet!" cautioned Cousin. "There it is again! A Mingo talkin', a Seneca, I'd say—Hear that jabber! Delaware — Wyandot — Taway (Ottawa). With a blanket o' Shawnee pow-wow. By heavens, Morris! This is Cornstalk's whole force. They've learned that Dunmore is at the Hockhockin' an' will be j'inin' up with Lewis any day, an' old Cornstalk thinks to lick Lewis afore Dunmore's men can git along!"

It was now after midnight, and I knew we should be back at camp and warning Colonel Lewis of his peril. I knew from my last talk with him that he did not expect to meet the Indians in any numbers until we had crossed the Ohio. Our failure to find any Indians at the Point and our prospects for an immediate crossing conduced to this belief.

The day before all the scouts had been instructed as to our maneuvers once we crossed the river and were searching for ambushes. It was terrible to think of our army asleep only three miles away. I urged an immediate return, but Cousin coolly refused to go until he had reconnoitered further.

"You stay here till I've sneaked down to the mouth o' the creek," he whispered. "'Twon't do for both of us to git killed an' leave no one to take the word to Lewis."

"But why run any risk?" I anxiously demanded; for I feared he had some mad prank in mind which would betray our presence and perhaps stop our warning to the army.

"We must l'arn somethin' as to how many o' the red skunks there be," he replied.

"To venture near their camp will mean discovery. They're very wide-awake."

"I ain't goin' near their camp," he growled in irritation. "I want to look over them rafts. I can tell from them how many warriors come over, or pretty close to it."

He slipped away and left me to do the hardest of the work—the work of waiting. It seemed a very long time before I heard the bushes rustle. I drew my ax, but a voice whispering "Richmond," the parole for the night, composed me. Feeling his way to my side he gravely informed me:

"There's seventy-eight or nine rafts an' a few

canoes. It's goin' to be a fine piece o' fightin'. At least there's a thousand warriors on this side an' a lot o' squaws an' boys."

I estimated our army at eleven hundred and I thanked God they were all frontiersmen.

Cousin now was as eager to go as I; and leaving our hiding-place, we worked north until we felt safe to make a détour to the east. Our progress was slow as there was no knowing how far the Indian scouts were ranging. Once we were forced to remain flat on our stomachs while a group of warriors passed within a dozen feet of us, driving to their camp some strayed beeves from the high rolling bottom-lands to the east. When the last of them had passed I observed with great alarm a thinning out of the darkness along the eastern sky-line.

"Good God! We'll be too late!" I groaned. "Let's fire our guns and give the alarm!"

"Not yet!" snarled my companion. "I must be in the thick o' that fight. We're too far east to git to camp in a hustle. We must sneak atween the hills an' that small slash (Virginian for marsh). Foller me."

We changed our course so as to avoid the low hills drained by Crooked Creek, and made after the warriors. About an hour before sunrise we were at the head of the marsh, and in time to witness the first act of the day's great drama. Two men

were working out of the fallen timber, and Cousin threw up his double-barrel rifle. I checked him, saying:

"Don't! They're white!"

"Renegades!"

"John Sevier's younger brother, Valentine. T'other is Jim Robertson."

"Then Lewis knows. He sent 'em to scout the camp."

"They're after game. James Shelby is sick with the fever. Yesterday morning he asked them to perch a turkey for him. Signal them. They know nothing about the Indians!"

Cousin risked discovery by standing clear of the bushes and waving his hat. "There comes two more of 'em!" he exclaimed.

This couple was some distance behind the Watauga boys, but I recognized them. One was James Mooney, my companion on the Coal River scout. The other was Joseph Hughey.

I jumped out and stood beside Cousin and waved my arms frantically. One of them caught the motion and said something. The four paused and stared at us. We made emphatic gestures for them to fall back. At first they were slow to understand, thinking, as Sevier told me afterward, that I was pointing out some game. Then they turned to run, Robertson and Sevier firing their rifles to the woods to the north of us.

These were the first guns fired in the battle of Point Pleasant. From the woods came the noise of a large body of men advancing. A ripple of shots was sent after the hunters. Hughey and Mooney halted and returned the fire. A streak of red some distance ahead of the Shawnees' position, and close to the river-bank, dropped Hughey dead. This shot was fired by Tavenor Ross, a white man, who was captured by the Indians when a boy and who had grown up among them.

Mooney, Robertson and young Sevier were now running for the camp, passing between the Ohio bank and the marsh. We raced after them just as a man named Hickey ran from the bushes and joined them. The Indians kept up a scattering fire and they made much noise as they spread out through the woods in battle-line. They supposed we were the scouts of an advancing army.

It is the only instance I know of where insubordination saved any army from a surprise attack, and possibly from defeat. To escape detection while breaking the orders against foraging, the five men named had stolen from the camp at an early hour.

By the time Cousin and I passed the lower end of the marsh small bodies of Indians were making for the hills along Crooked Creek; others were following down the Ohio inside the timber, while their scouts raced recklessly after us to locate our line of

battle. The scouts soon discovered that our army was nowhere to be seen. Runners were instantly sent back to inform Cornstalk he was missing a golden opportunity by not attacking at once.

Mooney was the first to reach Colonel Lewis, who was seated on a log in his shirt-sleeves, smoking his pipe. Mooney shouted:

"More'n four acres covered with Injuns at Old Town Creek!"

Rising, but with no show of haste, Lewis called to Cousin and me: "What about this?"

"An attack in force, sir, I believe," I panted.

He glanced at Cousin, who nodded and then ducked away.

"I think you are mistaken," the colonel coldly remarked. "It must be a big scouting-party." I tried to tell him what Cousin and I had seen and heard. But he ignored me and ordered the drums to beat To Arms. But already the border men were turning out and diving behind logs and rocks even while the sleep still blurred their eyes.

Colonel Lewis ordered two columns of one hundred and fifty men each to march forward and test the strength of the enemy. The colonel's brother Charles led the Augusta line to the right. Colonel William Fleming commanded the left—Botetourt men. The two columns were about two hundred yards apart, and their brisk and businesslike advance did the heart good to behold.

No one as yet except the hunters and Cousin and I realized the three hundred men were being sent against the full force of the Ohio Indians. Colonel Lewis resumed his seat and continued smoking.

"You're nervous, Morris. It can't be more than a large scouting-party, or they'd have chased you in."

"They came over on seventy-eight rafts!" I replied, turning to race after Colonel Charles Lewis' column.

The Augusta men were now swinging in close to Crooked Creek where it skirts the foot of the low hills. As I drew abreast of the head of the column we were fired upon by a large force of Indians, now snugly ensconced behind trees and fallen timber along the creek. We were then not more than a quarter of a mile from camp. The first fire was tremendously heavy and was quickly followed by a second and third volley. The Augusta men reeled, but quickly began returning the fire, the behavior of the men being all that a commander could desire. They were forced to give ground, however, as the odds were heavy.

On our left crashed a volley as the Botetourt men were fired on. Colonel Lewis ordered his men to take cover, then turned to Captain Benjamin Harrison and cried:

"This is no scouting-party! But my brother will soon be sending reinforcements."

He had hardly spoken before he spun half-way around, a surprised expression on his face.

"I'm wounded," he quietly said.

Then handing his rifle to a soldier, he called out to his men:

"Go on and be brave!"

With that he began walking to the camp. I ran to help him, but he motioned me back, saying:

"Your place is there. I'm all right."

So I left him, a very brave soldier and a Christian gentleman, to make his way alone while his very minutes were numbered.

Half a dozen of our men were down and the rest were slowly giving ground. Up to the time Colonel Lewis left us I had seen very few Indians, and only mere glimpses at that. Now they began showing themselves as they crowded forward through the timber, confident they were to slaughter us. Above the noise of the guns, the yells and shouts of red and white combatants, rose a deep booming voice, that of Cornstalk, and he was shouting:

"Be strong! Be strong! Push them into the river!"

We dragged back our dead and wounded as with a reckless rush the Indians advanced over logs and rocks up to the very muzzles of our guns. But although the Augusta line gave ground the men were not suffering from panic, and the smashing

volley poured into the enemy did great damage and checked their mad onslaught.

Never before did red men make such a determined charge. In an instant there were a score of individual combats, backwoodsman and savage being clinched in a death-struggle with ax and knife. Now our line stiffened, and the very shock of their attack seemed to hurl the Indians back. Still we would have been forced back to the camp and must have suffered cruel losses if not for the timely reinforcements brought up on the run by Colonel John Field, veteran of Braddock's and Pontiac's Wars.

He led Augusta and Botetourt men, for it was no longer possible to keep the two lines under their respective commanders, nor did any captain for the rest of the day command his own company as a unit. With the coming up of Colonel Field the Indians immediately gave ground, then charged most viciously as our men pursued. This maneuver was one of Cornstalk's cunning tactics, the alternate advance and retreat somewhat confusing our men.

The second attack was repulsed and the riflemen slowly gained more ground. The firing on our left was now very heavy and Colonel Field directed me to learn how the fight there was progressing. Some of our fellows were screaming that Fleming's column was being driven in, and our colonel had no intention of being cut off.

As I started toward the river I could hear Cornstalk exhorting: "Shoot straight! Lie close! Fight and be strong!"

As I withdrew from the right column I had a chance to get a better idea of the battle. The Indians lined the base of the hills bordered by Crooked Creek, and were posted on all the heights to shoot any whites trying to swim either the Ohio or the Kanawha. On the opposite side of the Ohio and, as I later learned on the south bank of the Kanawha, red forces had been stationed in anticipation of our army being routed.

As I neared the Botetourt men I could hear between volleys the Indians shouting in unison:

"Drive the white dogs over!" meaning across the river.

The Botetourt men were well posted and considerably in advance of the right column, as they had given but little ground while the right was retiring after Lewis was shot. At no time did either column fight at a range of more than twenty yards, and when I crawled among Fleming's men the range was not more than six yards, while here and there in the deeper growth were hand-to-hand struggles.

"A big chunk of a fight!" screamed a shrill voice, and Cousin was beside me, wearing a brilliant scarlet jacket. As he was crawling by me I caught him by the heel and dragged him back.

"You fool! Take that coat off!" I yelled. For the vivid splotch of color made him a tempting target for every Indian gun. And the Shawnees were skilful marksmen even if less rapid than the whites because of their inability to clean their fouled weapons.

Cousin drew up his leg to kick free, then smiled sweetly and said:

"It's my big day, Morris. Don't go for to meddle with my medicine. Everything's all right at last. I've found the long trace that leads to my little sister. She's waitin' to put her hand in mine, as she used to do on Keeney's Knob."

With that he suddenly jerked his leg free and sprang to his feet and streaked toward the savages, his blood-curdling panther-screech penetrating the heavier vibrations of the battle.

He was lost to view in the brush and I had my work to do. I kept along the edge of the timber, and answered many anxious queries as to the fate of the right column. I reassured them, but did not deem it wise to tell of Colonel Lewis' wound. I found the column quite close to the river and by the stubborn resistance it was meeting I knew the Indians were strongly posted.

"Why don't you whistle now?" they kept howling in concert, and referring to our fifes which were still.

"We'll kill you all, and then go and speak to

your big chief (Dunmore)," was one of their promises.

And there were other things shouted, foul epithets, which I am ashamed to admit could only have been learned from the whites. And repeatedly did they encourage one another and seek to intimidate us by yelling:

"Drive the white dogs over the river! Drive them like cattle into the water!"

While I kept well covered and was completing my reconnaissance I was horrified to see Colonel Fleming walk into the clear ground. He fired at an Indian who had showed himself for a moment to make an insulting gesture. He got his man, and the next second was struck by three balls, two passing through his left arm and the third penetrating his left breast.

He called out to his captains by name and sharply ordered them to hold their ground while he went to the rear to be patched up. He was answered by hearty cheers, but his absence was to be keenly felt by his officers. He started to work his way to the Point, but the exertion of bending and dodging from tree to stump sorely taxed him. I ran to his aid just as Davis, of Howard's Creek, sprang from behind a log and seized his right arm. Between us we soon had him back in camp and his shirt off. The lung tissue had been forced through the wound a finger's length. He asked me to put it back. I

attempted it and failed, whereat he did it himself without any fuss.

On returning to the right column to make a belated report to Colonel Field I ran across the body of Mooney, my partner on several scouts. He had been shot through the head. It may here be said that nearly all the dead on both sides were shot through the head or chest, indicating the accuracy of marksmanship on both sides.

I found the Augusta men steadily pushing the Indians back. But when they gave ground quickly, as if in a panic, it was to tempt the foolhardy into rushing forward. The riflemen had learned their lesson, however, and maintained their alignment. The advance was through nettles and briers, up steep muddy banks and over fallen timber.

The warriors rushed repeatedly to the very muzzles of our guns, and thus displayed a brand of courage never surpassed, if ever equaled, by the North American Indian before. It was Cornstalk who was holding them to the bloody work. His voice at times sounded very close, but although we all knew his death would count a greater coup than the scalps of a hundred braves we never could get him. He was too shrewd and evasive.

Once I believed I had him, for I had located him behind a detached mound of fallen timber. He was loudly calling out for his men to be brave and to lie close, when a warrior leaped up and started to

run to the rear. Then Cornstalk flashed into view long enough to sink his ax into the coward's head. It was all done so quickly that he dropped to cover unharmed.

That was one of his ways of enforcing obedience, a mode of terrorization never before practised by a war-chief to my knowledge. It was told afterward by the Shawnees that he killed more than that weak-hearted one during the long day. I saw nothing of the other chiefs who attended the conference in Cornstalk's Town while I was a prisoner. And yet they were there, chiefs of Mingos, Wyandots, Delawares and Ottawas.

"They're fallin' back! They're fallin' back!" yelled a voice in advance of our first line.

And the scream of a panther told us it was Cousin. He had worked across from the left column, and we were soon beholding his bright jacket in a tangle of logs and stumps.

The men advanced more rapidly, but did not break their line; and it was evident the savages were giving ground in earnest. Our men renewed their cheering and their lusty shouts were answered by the column on the river-bank, still in advance of us.

As it seemed we were about to rush the enemy into a panic we received our second heavy loss of the day. Colonel Field was shot dead. He was standing behind a big tree, reserving his fire for

an Indian who had been shouting filthy abuse at him. Poor colonel! It was but a ruse to hold his attention while savages up the slope and behind fallen timber drew a bead on him. Captain Evan Shelby assumed command and ordered the men to keep up the advance.

The Indians gave ground, but with no signs of confusion. Observing our left column was in advance of the right, Cornstalk was attempting to straighten his line by pulling in his left. As we pressed on we discovered the savages were scalping their own dead to prevent their hair falling into our hands. From the rear of the red men came the sound of many tomahawks. Cousin, who for a moment found himself at my side, exulted:

"Curse 'em! Their squaws an' boys are cuttin' saplin's for to carry off their wounded! They'll need a heap o' stretchers afore this day is over!"

The sun was now noon-high and the heat was beastly. The battle was at its climax. The left column was near a little pond and about fifty yards from the river, or a fourth of a mile beyond the spot where Lewis was shot. We had evened up this lead, and the battle-line extended from the river and pond to Crooked Creek and half-way down the creek, running from west to east and then southwest.

Cornstalk's plan was to coop us up in the Point and drive us into the Kanawha and Ohio. There

were times when our whole line gave ground, but only to surge ahead again. Thus we seesawed back and forth along a mile and a quarter of battle-line, with the firing equal in intensity from wing to wing. Nor had the Indians lost any of their high spirits. Their retreat was merely a maneuver. They kept shouting:

"We'll show you how to shoot!"

"Why don't you come along?"

"Why don't you whistle now?"

"You'll have two thousand to fight to-morrow!"

But the force that held them together and impelled them to make the greatest fight the American Indian ever put up, not even excepting the battle of Bushy Run, was Cornstalk. Truly he was a great man, measured even by the white man's standards!

"Be strong! Be brave! Lie close! Shoot well!" flowed almost uninterruptedly from his lips.

Davis, of Howard's Creek, went by me, making for the rear with a shattered right arm and a ghastly hole through his cheek. He tried to grin on recognizing me. Word was passed on from our rear that runners had been sent to hurry up Colonel Christian and his two hundred men. Among the captains killed by this time were John Murray and Samuel Wilson. It was a few minutes after the noon hour that Cousin emerged from the smoke on my right and howled:

"There's old Puck-i-n-shin-wa!"

He darted forward, clearing all obstacles with the ease of a deer. I saw the Shawnee chief, father of Tecumseh, snap his piece at the boy. Then I saw him go down with Cousin's lead through his painted head. Two savages sprang up and Cousin killed one with his remaining barrel. The other fired pointblank, and by the way Cousin fell I knew his object in wearing the scarlet jacket was attained. He had wished to die this day in the midst of battle.

William White killed Cousin's slayer. The boy was in advance of the line and his coat made him conspicuous. Doubtless the savages believed him to be an important officer because of it.

Five of them rushed in to secure his scalp, and each fell dead, and their bodies concealed the boy from view. Up to one o'clock the fighting raged with undiminished fury, with never any cessation of their taunts and epithets and Cornstalk's stentorian encouragement.

Now it is never in Indian nature to prolong a conflict once it is obvious they must suffer heavy losses. They consider it the better wisdom to run away and await an opportunity when the advantage will be with them. Cornstalk had been confident that his early morning attack would drive us into the rivers, thus affording his forces on the opposite banks much sport in picking us off.

But so fiercely contested had been the battle that none of our dead had been scalped except Hughey

and two or three men who fell at the first fire. By all that we had learned of Indian nature they should now, after six hours of continuous fighting, be eager to withdraw. They had fought the most bitterly contested battle ever participated in by their race.

Nor had they, as in Braddock's defeat, been aided by white men. There were, to be true, several white men among them, such as Tavenor Ross, John Ward and George Collet; but these counted no more than ordinary warriors and Collet was killed before the fighting was half over. According to all precedents the battle should have ended in an Indian rout by the time the sun crossed the meridian. Instead the savages stiffened their resistance and held their line.

Our men cheered from parched throats when word was passed that Collet's body had been found and identified. Poor devil! Perhaps it opened the long trace to him, where everything would be made right. He was captured when a child and had responded to the only environment he had ever known.

The case of such as Collet—yes, and of John Ward and Ross—is entirely different from that of Timothy Dorman, and others of his kind, who was captured when a grown man and who turned renegade to revenge himself for wrongs, real or fancied, on his old neighbors.

It was not until after seven hours of fighting that

we detected any falling off in the enemy's resistance. Even then the savages had the advantage of an excellent position, and to press them was extremely hazardous business. We continued to crowd them, however, until they were lined up on a long ridge which extended from the small marsh where Cousin and I first saw Robertson and Sevier, for half a mile to the east, where it was cut by the narrow bed of Crooked Creek.

None of us needed to be told that so long as the enemy held this ridge our camp at the Point was in grave danger. From the riflemen along the Ohio word came that the Indians were throwing their dead into the river, while squaws and boys were dragging back their wounded.

This had a heartening effect on us, for it indicated a doubt was creeping into the minds of the savages. Once they permitted the possibility of defeat to possess them their effectiveness would decrease. Company commanders called on their men to take the ridge, but to keep their line intact.

With wild cheers the men responded and buckled down to the grueling task. Every patch of fallen timber proved to be an Indian fort, where the bravest of the tribes fought until they were killed. It was stubborn traveling, but our riflemen were not to be denied.

From along the line would come cries of:

"Remember Tygart's Valley!"

"Remember Carr's Creek!"

"Remember the Clendennins!"

And always Cornstalk's voice answered:

"Be strong! Be brave! Fight hard!"

So we struggled up the slope, gaining a yard at a time and counting it a triumph if we passed a pile of dead timber and gained another a few feet beyond.

When we were most encouraged the Indians began mocking us and shouting exultingly and informing us that the warriors across the Kanawha and Ohio had attacked our camp and were massacring the small force retained there. This statement, repeatedly hurled at us with every semblance of savage gloating, tended to weaken the men's one purpose. We could capture the ridge—but! Behind our determination crawled the fear that we might be assailed in the rear at any moment.

Captain Shelby was quick to realize the depressing influence of this kind of talk, and shouted for the word to be passed that it was an Indian trick, that our troops were guarding the Kanawha for half a mile up the stream and that the warriors on the Indian shore could not cross over without the column on our left discovering the move.

This prompted our common sense to return to us, and we remembered that Andrew Lewis was too cool and shrewd to be caught napping. The Point was sprinkled with huge trees and it would take a

big force to clear it of our reserves; and the bulk of the enemy was before us on the ridge.

With renewed vigor we made greater exertions and at last reached the top of the ridge and cleared it. But even then the Indians were not defeated. They charged up with ferocious energy time after time, and the best we could do was to cling to our position and let them bring the fighting to us. So different was their behavior from any we had been familiar with in previous engagements we began to wonder if they would violate other Indian precedents and continue the battle into the night.

It was not until three or four o'clock that we noticed any lessening in their efforts to retake the ridge. At the best this afforded us only a short breathing-spell. There were many warriors still hidden along the slopes drained by Crooked Creek. Our line was so long there was always danger of the Indians concentrating and breaking it.

So long as we stuck to the ridge on the defensive the enemy had the advantage of the initiative. A runner brought up word from Colonel Lewis to learn the strength of the savages in the hills along the creek, and I was directed to reconnoiter.

I made for the creek from the south slope of the ridge. Sliding down the muddy bank, I ascended the opposite slope and began making my way toward the point where the creek cut through the ridge. I encountered no Indians, although axes and knives

on the ground showed where they had been stationed before retiring.

I passed through the cut and was suddenly confronted by what I thought at first must be the devil. The fellow was wearing the head of a buffalo, horns and tangled forelock and all. Through the eye-slits gleamed living eyes. The shock of his grotesque appearance threw me off my guard for a moment. He leaped upon me and we went down the bank into the bed of the creek.

He had his ax ready to use but I caught his hand. His hideous mask proved to be his undoing, for as we rolled about it became twisted. I was quick to see my advantage. Relying on one hand to hold his wrist, I used all my quickness and strength and succeeded in turning the mask half-way around, leaving him blind and half-smothered. I killed him with his own ax before he could remove his cumbersome headgear.

As none of his companions had come to his rescue I knew this marked their most advanced position in the hills. Having learned all I could without sacrificing my life, I began my retreat down the creek and narrowly escaped being shot by one of our own men.

Captain Shelby ordered me to report to Colonel Lewis, which I did, running at top speed without attempting to keep under cover. I found the reserves had thrown up a breastwork from the Ohio

to the Kanawha, thus inclosing the camp on the Point. It lacked half an hour of sunset when I reached the camp.

Colonel Lewis heard me, then ordered Captains Isaac Shelby, Arbuckle, Matthews and Stuart to lead their companies up Crooked Creek under cover of the bank until they could secure a position behind the Indians and enfilade their main line. I scouted ahead of this force. We circled the end of the Indian line, but were at once discovered.

Instead of this being our undoing, it proved to be all in our favor. Cornstalk's spies had kept him informed of Colonel Christian's presence a few miles from the Point. He took it for granted that this force in the hills behind his line was reinforcements brought up by Christian, and this belief caused him to order a general retirement across Old Town Creek. At that time Christian was fifteen miles from the Point. Sunset found us in full possession of the battle-field.

Leaving strong outposts, we retired to the well-protected camp, rejoicing loudly and boasting of more than two-score scalps. We carried off all our dead and wounded. The exact Indian loss was never definitely settled but it must have equaled, if not exceeded, ours. More than a score were found in the woods covered deep with brush, and many were thrown into the river.

This battle ended Dunmore's War, also known as

Cresap's War and the Shawnee War. So far as actual fighting and losses are considered it was a drawn battle. But as Cornstalk could not induce his men to renew the conflict, and inasmuch as they retreated before morning to the Indian shore, the victory must be held to be with the backwoodsmen.

And yet the tribes were not entirely downcast, for during the early evening they continued to taunt us and to repeat their threats of bringing an army of two thousand on to the field in the morning. In fact, many of our men believed the savages had a shade the better of the fight, and would renew hostilities in the morning.

That night we buried Shelby Cousin on the bank of the Kanawha and built a fire over his grave to conceal it. Colonel Christian arrived at midnight, and there was some lurid profanity when his men learned they had arrived too late for the fighting. One week after the battle eleven hundred troops crossed the Ohio to carry the war to the Indian towns for a final decision.

When thirteen miles south of Chillicothe, the town Governor Dunmore had ordered us to attack and destroy, a message arrived from His Lordship, directing Colonel Lewis to halt his advance, for peace was about to be made. Hostile bands had fired upon us that very morning, and the position was not suitable for a camp. Colonel Lewis continued the march for a few miles. Another messenger arrived

with orders for us to halt, for the peace was about to be consummated.

We went into camp on Congo Creek, about five miles from Chillicothe. The men raged something marvelous. They insisted that no decisive battle had been fought and that we had thrown away nearly a hundred lives if the fighting were not renewed. The Shawnees were in our power. What folly to let them escape!

Dunmore and White Eyes, the friendly Delaware chief, rode into camp and conferred with Colonel Lewis; and as a result we started the next day for Point Pleasant and Virginia. The men were all but out of bounds, so furious were they at not being loosed at the Shawnees.

Then began the talk that Dunmore brought on the war to keep our backwoodsmen busy in event the colonies rebelled against England; also, that he closed it prematurely so that the Indians might continue a menace to the border and thus keep the frontier men at home.

I was as hot as any against His Lordship for the way the campaign ended. We demanded blood for blood in those days; and never had the Virginia riflemen a better chance for inflicting lasting punishment on their ancient foes. And we were quick to blame His Lordship for a variety of unwholesome motives.

But with political rancor long since buried we

can survey that campaign more calmly and realize that as a result of the battle the northwest Indians kept quiet for the first two years of the Revolutionary War, and that during this period Kentucky was settled and the vast continent west of the Alleghanies was saved to the Union.

If the battle of Bushy Run took the heart out of the tribes confederated under Pontiac's masterly leadership, then Dunmore's War permitted us to begin life as a republic without having the Alleghanies for our western boundary. Nor can I hold in these latter days that His Lordship was insincere in waging the war; for England was against it from the first.

I believed he pushed the war as vigorously and shrewdly as he knew how; and I believe his was the better judgment in securing the best peace-terms possible instead of heaping defeat on defeat until the allied tribes had nothing left to bargain for. So I give His Lordship credit for making a good bargain with the Indians, and a bargain which aided the colonists during the struggle almost upon them. But I was very happy when Colonel Andrew Lewis drove him from Virginia.

CHAPTER XIII

PEACE COMES TO THE CLEARING

EARLY winter, and the wind was crisp and cold as I rode into Howard's Creek. Smoke rose from the cabins. I limped toward the Davis cabin, a strange shyness holding me back. Some one inside was singing:

"Ye daughters and sons of Virginia, incline
Your ears to a story of woe;
I sing of a time when your fathers and mine
Fought for us on the Ohio.
In seventeen hundred and seventy-four,
The month of October, we know,
An army of Indians, two thousand or more,
Encamped on the Ohio."

There was a whirl of linsey petticoats behind me, and two plump arms were about my neck; and her dear voice was sobbing:

"They didn't know! I feared you were dead beyond the Ohio!"

"But I sent you a message!" I protested, patting her bowed head. "I sent word by Moulton that it

was only an arrow-wound in the leg, and that I must wait."

"And he never came, nor brought your word! He stopped in Tygart's Valley and sent his brother to bring Mrs. Moulton and the children. One man said he heard you had been hurt. I wrote to Colonel Lewis but he was not at Richfield. So I never knew!"

We walked aside, and I petted her and listened to her dear voice and forgot the cold wind biting into my thin blood, forgot I would always walk with a slight limp. When we did awake, because the early dusk was filling the clearing, the singer was finishing his seventeen-stanza song:

"As Israel did mourn and her daughters did weep,
For Saul and his host on Gilbow,
We'll mourn Colonel Field and the heroes who sleep
On the banks of the Ohio."

And I thought of Shelby Cousin and the others, who gave their lives that we might meet thus without the war-whoop interrupting our wooing. And I wondered if our children's children would ever realize that the deaths died at Point Pleasant made life and happiness possible for them. I prayed it might be so, for lonely graves are not so lonely if they are not forgotten.

THE END

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WERT
BOOKBINDING
Grantville, Pa.
July—Aug 1985
We're Quality Bound

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00020711243